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ESSAY  
CONCERNING  
LIBERTY  
OF  
CONSCIENCE

By a Friend to the Estadlish'd CHURCH, in a  
LETTER to his Brother, *J. H.*



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Dear Brother,

**W**HEN last you Obliged me with your Conversation at my House, we fell into a Discourse Concerning Liberty of Conscience, which gives occasion to this Letter; and after you had Ingeniously offered your Sentiments upon that Subject, you was pleased to give a Patient, and an Attentive Ear to mine; which upon first hearing seem'd to please you; And upon second Thoughts you told me that you really Approved of them, as tho' out of the Common Road, yet True, and not Unworthy of the Eye of the World; since then you Assisted at the Birth of these Thoughts, and Commanded them into the Light, you must needs Undertake the Patronage of your own Production; otherwise I'me afraid it will be a Poor Helpless Orphan, Expos'd to the Rage of the Libertines of this Age, and Worried by that Toleration which it endeavours to Expose as an Enemy to Society. I must confess, it is a bold Undertaking in these few Sheets to Confront our Prevailing Indulgence, the Darling of these Kingdoms and People: But as I never valued any Opinion for the Cry of the People, so finding Toleration in the Press, and Lewdness and Libertinism Alamode and in Fashion, I was Tempted by your Encouragement, to tell the World, That Liberty of Conscience may be as Pertinently Pleaded by the Church, to secure Her against the Violence

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*of Dissenters of all Sorts, as in Behalf of them to Secure them against her Impositions. If what I here Offer can any way Contribute to Convince Men, that it is vain for them to leave the Communion of the Establish'd Church in quest of Christian Liberty of Conscience; or put any Check to that Pernicious Libertinism, which Debauches the Minds and Morals of Men, it Answers all that therein is Designed by,*

Your Affectionate Brother,

And Humble Servant.

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# ESSAY

CONCERNING

## LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

**T**HAT all Mankind Act by Light, That is by Virtue of some Principle that Informs them what to do, and what to avoid, for the Government of themselves in particular, and personal Capacities, as above, and contra-distinct to the class of unthinking Animals, is plainer to all, than to admit the Debate of any; That the same Principle Inclines them to Society, by discovering the wants and neediness of Humane Nature; and directing, that the Complicated Power of many, is a better, and safer Support, than the single Endeavours of single Persons, is, I suppose, plain beyond Dispute; and that, pursuant to this Light, seconded with the Childs Natural Love of, and Inclination to his Parent and his Customs, Men became a State or Kingdom, I cannot doubt. That this Light the Parent and Director of these several Humane Actions, is Conscience, I am the rather Inclined to believe, because the great Dr. Sanderson, Describes it, *Habitus vel facultas*; 'tis no matter which, *Intellectus practici quo mens hominis applicat Lumen quod sibi adest ad particulares actiones dirigendas*; So that these Particulares Actiones concentered in, and framed Society, the great Instrument of Mens happiness; for as Men Multiplied, each brought — into the World with him a Consciousness of his own Weakness, Inclining him to Converse with others of his own kind; which when it had received Spirit and Life, it grew into Maturity, and became the *Anima Societatis*, or the publick Conscience,

science, which, no doubt, was the Original whence Societies and States of all Sorts Sprung, and had their Rise: I take Conscience then to be the common parent of all Societies, whether Sacred or Civil; and from thence raise this Proposition.

When Mens Consciences have gathered them into Societies, and knit them into Bodies, politick by certain Rules and Measures of Government agreed upon by all, or the Representing Members, no Liberty of the same Conscience in private Members, can be pleaded as a Reason to Disband the Society, by a Violation of it's Rules.

This Proposition Respects Civil Societies, which are Children of the same Parent with Sacred ones; which is strengthened from this Consideration, that the Cement of all Society, the Breath of this Metaphorical Body, is the Union of the Minds of its Members; which is no more than the Light of each particular Conscience and Soul, growing into one great Light, for the Common direction of all, and digested into Rules of Action for the common benefit; so that Men Incorporated into a State or Kingdom, have given up the private Spirit, and must not apply to that for direction in that Capacity, but to the common Standard, which because it derives from all, must be supposed to have an equal good influence upon all: For I take the general good influence of Laws Establish'd by common Suffrage upon Societies, to be the return of each Members disbursement to the common Stock; so that the Execution of Laws for the common good, is no more than the warm Returns of Advantage upon each particular, who gave their contribution and consent, either by themselves or Representatives, to the publick Establishment, insomuch that there can be no reserve of a Liberty to Violate or Recede from the Rules of that Society, which supports a Man in those Rights which he can justly claim by the Rules of its Constitution; the Reason is plain, because having those Rights, he hath the Fruits of his Labour, and Return of his Contribution; and because it were the heighth of folly to expose a Constitution Establish't by publick Conscience and Suffrage, to the force and invasion of the Unbridled Liberty of any Member.

Mankind in all Ages, and in all Governments, have been aware of this; therefore we find that in all Schemes of Policy, after they  
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have provided for the Inward and more Noble parts of the Body, by Circulation of Justice, through its Veins and Arteries, they then secured its outward parts, by Penal Statutes against any, who dared to offer Violence there: And hence proceed all those Singulary Laws, which lopp off those unsound Members, which kick at the publick, and wantonly Invade the Government, by the strength of her own favours towards them.

But tho' the several Schemes of Civil Government in the World, derive from the common Conscience of Mankind; yet we seldom find Conscience either urged for Obedience of them, or Liberty of Conscience pleaded for a breach of them; the Reason whereof is, not but that Civil Government oblidgeth that Conscience of Mankind into a Submission from whence it derived; neither can any new, or further Light of any particular Member (that perhaps directs to better Rules of Government, than those already agreed upon, and Establish'd) warrant him to Recede from the received Rules or Endeavour, an Irregular change; because that commonly ends in Confusion, unless by that new Light he can inform the *Anima Societatis*, and direct the Governing party, in whose hands, next under God, the change is, to better Methods; for convictions of Conscience, that respect the iniquity of Government, and aym at a change thereof, ought not to leave those Breasts in which they are hatch'd, untill by an Address to the Governing Powers, the desir'd Reformation, (and there must be Demonstration, that it is a Reformation) to Consecrate any attempt towards a publick Change, may be regularly Effected; and that, because nothing is so directly against Conscience, as Confusion in the Community, which the Irregular steps of a Change do inevitably occasion.

For tho' clearer Discoveries of Reason may enable a private Member of the State, to know the flaws of a Constitution, and the proper Remedys for them; yet, because he can't by himself revoke the grant that he has given of himself to the Governing Powers, he cannot in Conscience, without those to whom he has given his Voice and Suffrage Endeavour the Change, otherwise than by an Application to them, to hear his Reasonings, and Submit to the Force of them: The Reason is, because when private Conscience offers

offers at a Change, the Governing party, who believe their Rights invaded thereby, is disgusted at it, and will hardly espouse, even an expedient Reformation, which did not commence from themselves: And also because the Multitude in, and upon whom the Reformation is to be wrought, being under some sense, Suggested either by fear, or love of their dependance upon the Governing Powers, are readiest to receive Revolutions from their influence and sway; there being a Regular Derivation of direction from the Head to all the Members, which is not to be found among the Members with respect to one another. And from this Consideration arose great Councils and Parliaments, that each Member of Wisdom and Experience in Government, might Unite his knowledge and direction with that of the Governing Powers; that from thence, as the proper course of good Order and Administration, it might be conveyed through all the Veins of the Publick, and refresh the whole Common wealth: For the same Councils which (thus used) subsist and strengthen the State, might waste and consume it, by improper means of Suggesting them.

But the true Reason why under Civil Government Men are better Subjects than to the Church, and don't so often sculk under the covert of Conscience, is because the rewards and punishments of the State, do more feelingly Imprets them than those of the Church, when good Services are Rewarded with Preferment and Grandeur, and Ill Offices are Punished with the Pillory and Gibbet, it leaves but little Roome for a suggestion of Conscience to sway a Man in the case of obeying, or disobeying the Civil Powers. And hence it is that Men comply with all the Ceremonies of State, though less Significant than those of the Church, who yet scruple, and that under covert of Conscience at Decency and Order in the House of God, inasmuch that they will Vouchsafe their Knee to the King, and deny it to God.

But certainly, if these were truly Men of Conscience, as pretended, the Sovereignty of God, tho' Invisible, would incline them to as much Deference to him, as the trifling Pomp of Temporal State Extorts from the Subjects of the Princes of this World,



The Second Proposition I offer is, Whereas there is no Universal Civil Monarch, Mankind are free in each Nation, to appoint such a Scheme of Government as best serves the publick good, and suits with the Genius of the People; and tho' in the the Modelling of it, they be directed by no Light, but that of Reason, yet the Subjects are bound in Conscience to obey: When the World grew Populous by the Multiplication of Mankind, the Family became too great and numerous, either for the Government, or Maintenance of one Father, insomuch that Universal Monarchy became Impracticable; and tho' Men derived the same common Principles for the Government of Appetite and Aversion, from the common Fountain of Light, The Great Creator; yet because they could not live in one Herd, they could not derive their Government from one Head, and so were directed by the Light they brought into the World with them, to Unite under different Heads; yet not to make any difference in those Laws which Link all Mankind together by community of Nature, and Creation; for no positive Laws can Superfede the Obligation of them. But because, tho' Men brought with them common Notions, yet being Born in different Climats, they were of Different Humours and Dispositions, which required that, That general Principle of Light and Conscience which Inclines them to Society and Government in the general, should be applied particularly to the frameing such a Constitution as might best Suit to the Encouragement of such Virtues, as such a Set of Mankind so Circumstantiated as to Climate, or Kingdom, are inclined to; and to chek such Vices as they are aptest to commit.

It seems as Reasonable to allow several Setts of Men this Liberty, thus to provide for themselves (since they had lost the direction of one general Natural Parent, and were put upon Providence, and their own Discretion) as to allow every particular Man a liberty of Judging for himself, and choosieing for himself in a private capacity; for we may suppose that Nations, as well as particular Persons, may Ripen to a degree of Wisdom, to judge and know what makes for them, or against them; and the Light that directs them, moving in that publick Sphere, may as truly be termed publick Conscience, as

the suggestions of any private Mans Breast or Thoughts can weare the name of private Conscience, and the Subjects of a Government that derives from the Light of Nature, are in Conscience Obliged to Obedience: First, because it is hard to suppose any contradiction betwixt the general Conscience that Informs, and Enlightens the whole Body politick, and that which Illuminates every private Breast therein; especially considering them both in a State of Nature, where no Revelation is pretended to direct to things above, or beside the common Standard of Reason: And indeed, I don't find Conscience often pleaded for the Disobedience of Government, but where Revelation, or at least Enthusiasm is pretended to, Men generally giving up the Plea of Conscience in that point, as believing that nothing short of a Divine Warrant can justify them in Resistance of a Government that they have contributed to Establish, and consented to Submit to. And suppose the Subjects of a Civil Sovereign should under covert of Natural Conscience, or the Suggestions of Reason, without Revelation, turn Mutinous and Disobedient, it is Lawful for him to quell them by force, if Argument will not prevail; but Reason being Mens peculiar, and distinguishing Character, I hold that deference is due to it, by the Light of Nature, as that it may, and should claim the Umpridge of all their Debates, before they offer at Blood or Blowes, or any Hostility and Violence, Fighting without Previous Reasoning, being Brutal Inhumanity.

But when Arguments fail, The Governing Powers who hold the common Conscience, as well as Purse of the Society in their hands, may pursuant to it, check the Mutiny and Disobedience of Subjects by Force of Arms, because they have Counter-acted their Conscience and Reason, by raising Mutiny in the Community, which is so great a mischief, that even the Reformation of abuses it self cannot Consecrate it

*Presbitery in England*, and the removal of Gabals, and Taxes upon Fruit in *Naples*, did nor, could nor quit Cost for all the Blood spilt by *Oliver Cromwel*, and *Massa Niello* the *Fisher-man*; for Re-formations in the hands of the People, when they don't derive from the Head, and run through Regular Conveyances to all the Mem-  
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bers, are but Instruments of the most Butcherly Cruelties, and therefore great Care is to be taken, and that Suggested by Conscience too, that the Governing Powers be made Acquainted with, and Convinced off, the Necessity of Reformation, when the Publick calls for them.

But if we must Form an Ill-Natur'd Hypothesis, That if the Governing Powers will not forward Reformations, when it is Manifest that the Publick is ready to dye for want of them, what then ought the Subjects to do in Conscience?

I Answer First, in those States and Kingdoms, that derive their Government from the Common Reason of the Society, and claim no higher an Original, the Governing Powers are only Trustees of the Community, and if it be Notorious, that they abuse their Trust, to the Prejudice of the Publick, by not laying out that Power and Treasure committed to, and Devolved upon them, for the General Advantage, but rather make the Peoples Complicated Power an Instrument to Destroy themselves, in such a Case I say, Pursuant to Reason and Natural Conscience, the grant made by such a Community, to such Male Administ'ring Powers, is Revokable and has been often Revok'd, with good Success to the Publick. *for no regular Council can be made by such a Community*

But I don't say, that this Grant can be Revok'd by any particular Male-Content, set of Subjects of a Kingdom or State, in a Conventicle by themselves, but in the fullest and freest Assembly of the Wissest Men in a Common-Wealth Representing the rest, for in such Cases the Governing Powers, divest themselves of the Relation of Superiours to the Community, and leave them to Provide for themselves in that State of Nature, in which Government and Authority first found them; it being as Consistent with the Conscience of the Community, to Provide against the Tyranny of Superiours, as against the Confusion of no Government at all; but to prevent all Mistakes in this Case, the Stipulation betwixt Sovereign and Subjects, and the Breach on either Side, ought all to be Written with Beams of the Sun, that he that Runs may Read, I am of Opinion, and my Conscience Suggested it to me, that there ought to be this Difference betwixt the Punishment of Male-Administ'ring Governours, and Mutinying Subjects, that the former

can only be Punished with a Revoke of that Grant and Obedience, of the People by Virtue whereof, and their Commission from God, they were Invested with Sovereignty with a Salvo, still of their Persons and Private Fortunes, ; whereas Mutinying Subjects against Government Legally Administred, deserve Death for their being Incendiary's for holding a Faggot to the Publick Combustion ; Whereas whoever was possessed of Sovereignty, ought to be better Treated even for Conscience Sake ; because it Suggests, that if they may be sunk into the Common Fate of Thieves, Villains and Rascallity of the People, few wou'd wear Crowns with such a Black Prospect of Misery, upon failure in the Administration, so the Community might be without Government, than which nothing more Contradicts Conscience the Common Sense of Mankind, whereas Indemnity and Pardon to Private Rebellious Members, were no better than a Virtual Licence to other Men of no Conscience, nor Principles to set Fire to the State.

So that from what I have offered, it appears that Conscience Obligeth the Governing Powers to provide for the safety of the Community by Violence, even by Death, when perswasives will not do with the People. And the same Principle Obligeth the Community in Council, and upon Mature Deliberation to Revoke their Grant, from those Governing Powers who won't perform with them, still with a Salvo of their Persons, for as there is no Reserve of Liberty of Conscience in the Subject singly, to Counter-act or undo his Grant to the Sovereign, so there is no Liberty of Conscience Reserved to the higher Powers, whereby they should use their Trust, to other ends than those for which it was Granted them: And I think that the great Governour of the World, has mightily Consulted the Interest thereof, by Blessing the Generallity of Mankind, with such a Standard of Conscience, as might secure the Sovereignty from the Insult of the Subject, and the Subject from the Violence of Armed Powers.

The Third Proposition I offer is, In Christian States and Churches that are Establish'd by positive Laws of God, Twisted with those of Nature, or by the Light of Revelation and Reason Complicated, if there be not a Manifest Contradiction betwixt the Laws of them which

which derive from Humane Prudence, and those which derive *True, but*  
 from particular Revelation: The People can have no Warrant from *every man*  
 Conscience to Disobey the Governing Powers. *is Judge of that at his peril*

To make this appear it will be necessary to consider, That in all Christian Governments there are some Laws that derive from the Common Reason of the Society, which particularly Respect Civil, and Political Life; and some which are derived from the Common, and received Revelations amongst them, and these respect the Government of Christian, and Spiritual Life: And altho' the Doctrines of Christianity, which still Ingage our Belief, and the Precepts of it, which always require our Obedience, do not so far come under the Cognizance of Humane Reason and Prudence, as to receive any Change or Alterations from its Authority; yet when Christians are Formed into a Body Politick, and Twist their Religion into their Constitution, Humane Reason comes in for the appointment of Rules, whereby even that Religion which is of a Higher, yea Divine Birth, may be duly Excercised among the People.

Because when God Almighty recommended Christianity to the World, it was to Men already Endow'd with Reason, which is a Principle of Light, derived from the same Fountain with all Divine Revelations that are truly so; and their Harmony and Relation could not be better Manifested, than to suffer Reason to befriend, and Work that Revelation into a regular Establishment, which brought Credentials enough to prove its Divine Original; for tho' at first it Surprized, and Nonplussed Reason, with a *Trinity* in *Unity*, with the Conception of a *Virgin*, and Birth of a *GOD*; yet afterwards it Submitted to the Conduct of Reason to gain Footing, and Establishment in the World, it was Necessary in point of Reason that it should be Usher'd into the World with Miracles, because Reason wou'd have been apt to reject those Doctrines which are above its Searches, as False and Spurious, if they had been Vouch't and Attested only by what is Plain and Obvious: For strange and uncommon Doctrines must have Uncommon Evidence to Recommend them, otherwise Men will be Inclind to think it is but a Cheat put upon their Minds, it being Necessary to support the Esteem of all Doctrines, either by their benigne Oblidging Influence, or Miraculous Attestations; Miracles

are commonly so contrived as to be Address to the Senses, and when they are convinced of the matter of Fact, they convey great Images of the Power that wrought them to the Mind, which prepare the Mind to receive that Doctrine as Divine, which is attended with such uncommon *Phænomenas*; all which indeed supposes that there are lodged in the Mind, some Mighty *Ideas* of the Power of God, according to which it *Estimates* both the Divinity of the *Doctrine* that is Recommended, and the wonders that *Attest* it. But however, when Christianity had by Miracles proved its Original, Then it Vouchsafed to stoop to the Conduct of Reason and Humane Prudentials, in Order to its Promotion and Establishment in the World, insomuch that now the Schemes of Christian States and Kingdoms, are Complicated of Reason and Revelation; and because Miracles cease now, and Mankind want them to Support Revealed Doctrines in their Esteem. The common Reason of *Christians*, in the several Nations and Churches of *Christendom*, have secured those Sacred Doctrines from an open Opposition by *Mulcts* and *Penaltys*, insomuch that no wanton *Liberty of Conscience* dare Impugne them. For sure it must be allowed more Reasonable to *Restrain* that *Liberty* by Laws and Punishments, than to *Expose* those *Doctrines* to its Insult and Scorn, which God has appointed to be the means of Grace and Salvation: And had not the Church provided against Innovations in the Faith, by her own Censures, and the assistance of the Temporal Power too; Liberty of Conscience, and the Reputation of Governing a Party, had long ago frightened Christianity out of the World; so that however Innocent and Holy a Religion Christianity is, it can *Anathematize* its Enemies hear, as well as Damn them hereafter, if they *Obstinatly* Invade its Rights: For the Obligation that lies upon our Religion to perpetuate it self, Impowers it to restrain all Liberty that is Pernicious to it, as much as its Native Sanctity enables it to beat down Vice and Wickedness: If St. Peter, *Acts* 5. Executing his Office, Rebuked *Ananias*, and *Saphira* to Death, for keeping back some of the price for which they sold the Land, because they *Lyed to the Holy Ghost*, then certainly it consists with the Natural Innocency of the Gospel, to use Severitys against those *Impieties*, and their Authors, who Im-

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pugne and Invade it's Truth ; and though it mightily betriends and Supports our Natural Powers of Freedom of Choice and Aversion, yet it must Check and Restrain all Libertys against it self, inso- much that where ever the Gospel is in it's purity, and upon the Estab- lishment, the Governours of the Church Retain the same Power of punishing it's Enemy's in an Ordinary way by Humane prudentials, which the Apostles Exercised in an Extraordinary way and by Mira- cle ; otherwise the Beasts of the Forrest, the Libertines, those Beasts of the People had long ago torne the Sacred Trinity, Nay the whole Scheme of Christianity in pieces.

But there are a set of Men in the World, who turn the Innocency of Gospel Principles against it Self, and think that they may Af- front that Religion with Impunity, but in it's own Nature is so Harmless and Inoffensive, whereas they retain no more Liberty nor are they Indulged by any Principle of Reason or Conscience to do so now, more than they had, who Lived at its First Promulga- tion to Dissent from, or Rise up against it, when it Shone bright with the Life and Miracles of it's Author.

I would ask any of our Liberty-Mongers, whether when our Sa- viour Appear'd in the World with Holiness to an Example, and Mi- racles without Exception, Men could then plead Liberty of Con- science, and oppose it to his then New Doctrines, and their Dis- ciple-ship to him ; if that Plea wou'd have been Impertinent then (as I presume) they own it wou'd, then I say it must be so too, when it's offered now against a pure Establish'd Church, for Christianity ought to be reckoned in it's purity to them, who by Vertue of any new Light, cannot provide that it warm the Breasts, and Circulate in the Body of Christians more Effectually than it does, by Vertue of that Establishment which they oppose ; for the truth of this I appeal both to the Rules and Practice of those who have broken our Unity, and am ready to be determin'd by them, whether their Rules be better fitted for that end, or whether in their Practice, they have more Effectually attained it ; and as to the Miracles which in our Saviours Days, might have Silenced any clamours of Consci- ence against him and his Doctrine, I Answer, Since it pleased him to Supersede Miracles, which then were the Fences and Guardians



of the Gospel, by Legal and Prudential Establishment and Government, those who by a Plea of Conscience turn Mutineers & Play their Arguments against that, ought to Convince the World Irrefragably, that the Government they would Introduce, is better and Elder than what they oppose; otherwise their Arguments are but Fullom Sophistry, and their Light but Darknets, and cannot justly be Charged upon Conscience, that, being a *Domesticum Numen* a Light from Heaven, which like the Gospel proves it's Heavenly Original, by patiently submitting to what is sufferable in Government, rather than inflaming the World by Opposition; for in Re-formations which are not Warranted by particular Directions from Heaven, nor from the Constitution or Pulse of the Government under which they are made, nor by Irremediable and Destructive evils, put upon the People by the higher Powers, there is always a certain Mischief, but an uncertain Conveniency; the certain Mischief is the Unhinging and Disseizing the People of the present Basis of their Peace, and the Danger of Fermenting them unto Anarchy and Disorder, the uncertain Conveniency is the probability of their not Agreeing upon better Scheme than what they have Discarded, therefore either the mistakes of such Consciences as suggest such Re-formations, are to be Corrected, or their Liberty so Restrained, that however Private Sentiments may be Entertained against the Publick, yet that they break not out into such Acts as are Troublesome and Unpeaceful, for unless this Power be allowed to all Societies Sacred and Civil, they must Disband and Dissolve, as often as the Unbridled Libertine pleases to give out his Mandates; which were to Magnifie private Bosom-Sentiments, above the Complicated Wisdom of the Community in Council, and to expose the Wilest Constitutions, to the Insult and Conquest of every Feavourish or Fanatical Head.

When Opinions remain in the Breasts that Hatch't them, and do not offend the Publick by outward Acts, they do not come under humane Cognizance, they are then properly to be beaten down by Argument and Perswasion, but cannot be touch'd by Force or Violence; thus a private Subject may think a Lawful Merciful King, to be a Tyrant and Usurper, for which though remaining so, he is only

only Accountable to God, but if that Thought breaks out into Treason and Assassination of his Person, then because it's inquiry may reach him, his Authority doth Actually reach it, to the Discouragement of the *Treason*, and Punishment of the *Delinquent*; even so private Opinions in reference to a pure Establish'd Church, tho' they may have an ill Aspect upon Her, yet because remaining such they cannot touch Her; She can take no Cognizance of them; but if they break out into Railing against Her Doctrines, and Contempt of Her Authority; sure it is as Reasonable to allow Her a Conscience to Punish such Offences, as to allow private Persons a Conscience to offer them: And if Argument and Perswasion will not do, which ought always first to be used; Then I think it more Reasonable to ply Obstinate Delinquents, with such force as may convince them of their Imprudence, in disturbing a Sound, well Settled Church, Than that the Church should suffer, either in her Doctrine or Government, by an unseasonable Reformation offer'd, by Unauthorized Persons: If it should be Urg'd hear, *That our B. Saviour, the Founder of the Christian Church, used no Force, but Argument and Perswasion to Proselyte the World to himself; therefore it cannot be Lawful in his followers.*

To this 'tis Answered, That his Arguments and Perswasion, as well as his Power, is *Omnipotent*; That the one can Change Minds, as well as the other can Work Miracles in an instant; and because this *Omnipotent Perswasion*, no less then the Power of Miracles is not left in the Church, for by the one, Prejudices and Prepossessions were removed from the Mind as easily, as Blindness from the Eyes, or Deafness from the Eares, by the other: It seem'd good to God, when Civil and Sacred Rites are upon the same Establishment, to allow the Church such a Coercive Power, as not to allow Her Enemies, as well as Friends, an equal share of Temporal Advantages and Civil Preferments, that they should not be Encouraged to Disobedience and Rebellion, by the Indulgence of their Mother.

That the Church may do this, will be allowed by all, who consider what Precedency Sacred Authority ought to have over that which is purely Civil; and by all who consider, that a Church wou'd have but little Advantage by being upon the Establishment, were

Civil Magistrates, who are upon the same Bottom Licensed, to oppose her Doctrines and Government; besides, since Emperors and Kings became Christians, their Inauguration Vows, and Coronation-Oaths, do sufficiently Proclaim what Deference they own to be due to *Holy Church*, and Her *Sacred Authority*, insomuch that they all Solemnly Swear to Preserve Her Rites; and how that can be otherwise done, than by Encouraging her Friends, and Punishing Her Enemies, I cannot see; tho' I would have this Punishment reach no farther, than to Silence the Clamours of the Conscientious Libertine against the Church, and to Incapacitate him to serve the State in any Post Civil or Military; and surely they, who would not buy their *Liberty of Conscience* at this Cheap Rate, have no Conscience at all.

But to allow a Liberty in the fullest Latitude of it, so as to advance the loosest Libertines to the best Preferments in a Setled Government; however it may Cheat the State by allaying the Tempers, and giving some Lucid Intervails to the Favour of the People; yet it is the readiest way to Blood, and Anarchy; for the same Liberty which they claimed as the grant of Heaven to Disengage them of the Check of the Government, under which they lived, will also Prompt them to possess themselves of the Government, when through its giving way to them, in Compassion to their Conscience, they are able to make Head against that Establishment, whose Indulgence gave them Birth.

And when the aggrieved Party becomes the Establishment, They Assert the same Liberty, in Imposing Rules upon others, whereby they may become free from their Insult and Invasion, which they pleaded to Disengage themselves from the Check of a Superiour, when they were upon the Indulgence of others: So that this Unbridled Liberty becomes Tyrannical to Inferiours, when it is in *Cathedra* as I may say, and Vexatious to Superiours, when it is upon Sufferance, insomuch that the *Liberty of Conscience* now in Vogue can be nothing but an Artifice, whereby Men withdraw themselves from the present Government, That they may become Governours, and Impose such Restraints upon the Liberty of others, which they would not Submit to, as being by them reckon'd Impositions.



Besides, when we consider that there is greater probability of the publick's Suffering by private Libertines, than of their suffering any Hardships by it; we will be the more Inclined to think that it is in the Power of the Governing Party to impose such Restraints as secure themselves, and the Duty of the others to Submit to them.

And if the greatness of Danger, and Mischief, be measured by their ill Influence upon the Publick Safety of the Community, rather than by the Inconveniency of some few Disaffected Libertines; then sure the Governing Party is in more danger, by the Invasion of private Male-Contents, than they can be, by the Imposition of the Higher Powers: For not one Blow that is Struck at a Constitution or Government, but perhaps Kills 1000. whereas the Government can single one Rebel out of a Herd, and cut him shorter by the Head for Example; which can be no such Mischief to Mankind in general, the good whereof is supposed to be the end of all Constitutions Sacred and Civil.

Hence it is that the Book of God is so freighted with Precepts of Obedience to the Higher Powers, insomuch as the Gospel seems to make Provision against the Violence of private Persons towards a Government, with a great many more Penal Injunctions, than it has provided against offering private Persons any Force by the Community; because it supposes the Wisdom of the Community better Qualified to appoint Rules for publick Order, than private Persons can: Therefore there was more necessity to check the Liberty of the Subject, than to direct the Wisdom of the Government, tho' that be not wanting neither in the Holy Bible.

So that to me it seems plain, That Communitys, whether Sacred or Civil, may as well plead Conscience in Punishing private Persons, for their Disobedience, as private Persons may plead it, for their Offending that way, especially when we consider that there are more promises in Scripture, of the Holy Spirits assisting two or three, or an Assembly Lawfully convened for the Management of publick Affairs, than to private Persons: And when, by what I have as yet offered, their Punishment only reaches to the Silencing their Clamours against the Church, and Incapacitating them to serve

in any Post, in a Christian common wealth: For certainly no Constitution that is not vested with this Power, can promise it self any Life or Continuance, but may be choak't with the Libertines Conscience as often as he pleases.

I think it then Adviceable for the Subjects of these Nations, who have lost all Conscience, Inquest of the Liberty thereof, to fix and appoint in such Limits, beyond which no party upon the Establishment shall offer to command any thing, nor within which no party upon sufferance, shall dare to refuse their Obedience, otherwise in the frequent Revolutions, that these Kingdoms suffer, Men will still be at a loss, what they may Command, and what they should Obey in Conscience; and for ought I know, the want of this very thing, gives occasion to our too too frequent Convulsions of Church and State.

It's true, We have the general Standards of Religion and Justice, viz, The Laws of Revelation from God, and the Laws of our Nations from our Ancestors; but when these must undergoe the Eye, and Examín of the party upon sufferance, as well as of that upon the Establishment; and when their Judgment of them must be the *Adequate* Rule of their Consciences: There is no doubt but the publick must have a Blow, it not being to be presumed, that the general Rule of Scripture and Laws, will be Interpreted in favour of those, who keep the Interpreters *at Under*, so that for a Government to Indulge a Liberty to Persons Disaffected to it self, to Interpret it's Grand Character, and to make that Interpretation the Rule of their Obedience, is but to Licence its Enemies to Undermine its Foundation, and Stab it to the Heart: For in these Cases it is usual with Men to Blend their Secular Interests with their Sacred ones, and it will be easie to Wrest a Text so, as to Cheat the People into a Belief of their being in the Right; and when they are under that Perswasion, they are in Conscience, Fortooth, Inclined to Change, and Faction; that they may Advance those Teachers, whose Doctrines Obliged their Fancies, and Skin'd over their Sins.

To Obviate which, I think every Church and State ought in Conscience, to keep the Interpretation of their own Charters, and Laws, in their own Hands, so far at least, as not to suffer the Glosses  
of

of their Enemies to be the Rules of the Peoples Obedience, and to conclude all their Subjects by it; and if there be a Set of Male Contents, among them whose Temporal Interests oblige them to continue, suppose in a Monarchical State, and Episcopal Church; and yet whose Consciences will not be concluded by the Civil, or Ecclesiastical Laws of that Church or State; I think it much more Advisable, that these People suffer some Inconveniency, if it were Banishment, whither perhaps they may carry Sound Consciences, and broken Estates, than that they should be suffered to Sting the Bosome, whose warmth gave them Birth: Because it is more probable that fewer will suffer by their Exile, then would by the Fever which their ill Blood, and Clamouring against the Government, will Create in the State; neither would I have Such Desperate Remedies used, but in Eminent great Dangers, in which case I think the Church or State, ought in Conscience to prefer their own Safety, to the tender Consciences of a few of their Subjects: And tho' I hate the *French* Methods of Dragooning Men into *Mass*, and *Papish* Principles, yet I think the Civil Wars of *France* betwixt the *Catholicks* and *Hugonets*, in *Charles* the 9th, *Henry* the 3d, and *Henry* 4th's time, Committed a greater waite upon Mankind, and Disgraced Christianity as much as the late persecution of *Lewis* the 14th; for in the Civil Wars of that Kingdom, there were Thousands of Criminals on all sides, as in all Civil War there must; whereas in this last the Mighty *Lewis* bore all the blame himself,

But it is strange to think, That the Consciencious Male-Contents of these our Kingdoms have had Consciences of that make, that they will rather raise a War against the Government, or kindle Sedition among the People, tho' with the Destruction of Thousands of Christians, than Swallow down any decent Cermonies of the Churches Appointment, which they account Impositions: Nay, They will not hear the Scriptures, and Commandments, which they own to be from Heaven, publicly Read in Church by the Establish't Clergy, for fear of wounding their Consciences, which is perfect Cheat and Contradiction: For their owning these parts of our Service to be from Heaven, Voids all plea of Conscience, for their not coming to hear

them, especially when we don't blend them with any Superstitious Pageantry.

But the Mystery of this Iniquity lies here, in the frequent turns that *Episcopacy* and *Presbitery* has had, especially in *Scotland*, the Parties, according as they Alternately had Power to Suppress one another, treated the Discountenanc'd party with some Severities, which kindled Resentments against them as Enemies, which Resentments they blended with their Principles, and Debauch't their Consciences with them, insomuch that being thus heated with Malice, upon the Score of Reciprocal Injuries, they darken their Minds, and coole their Charity, and pretend they cannot in Conscience communicate with one another, in those things, which both their Consciences laying aside the ferment of their Resentment, and Passions own to be Good and Lawful.

Thus because some, who wore the Name and Character of being *Episcopal*, bore hard upon *Presbitery*, when it was under Hatches; The *Presbiterians* mixt their Resentments upon that account, with the Sense of their Devotion towards God, and wou'd not Worship in common, with those who were of the same Perswasion with them, who had Treated their Brethren with any Severity, *Et vice versa*; tho' the things wherein they were, and ought to have joyned in, in publick Worship, were not concerned in those things which are the occasion of Heat and Debate among them; so Natural almost it is for Men, who entertain any Debates in point of Religion, at once to make all their Anger seem to have its Rise from thence, and to Cloak and Consecrate their Variance, Suggested by their Ambition, and Sinful folly, with the *Specious* Pretext of Conscience, because it seems to carry with it an Air of something that is Divine and Unaccountable.

Whereas if Conscience be as it certainly is, a Light within us, which is the Immediate Governess of all our Actions, but such as Recieves Direction from Received Revelations of God, and Stated Laws of the Kingdom, it can never be Pertinently Quoted as the Parent of such Un-Christian and Mischivous Divisions, and if any pretend to a Light within him, a Conscience that inclines him to Counteract all the Rules and Orders of a Society whether Sacred or Civil

Civil, and which will Receive no Direction from the Common reason, nor Received Revelation of that Society; they are to be Discarded and Recieved where they can, if there be any such Herd in the World like themselves to whom they may Associate, but for ought I know, however divided Christendom now stands as to points of Religion, if Men would lay aside those Un-Charitable hates, which kindle and arise from their Espousing and Maintaining different Parties and Factions, they might with safe Consciences unanimously Worship, even according to the Light of the Gospel, which Shines thro' all Christendom, *Jesus the Saviour of the World, with one Heart and with one Mouth, for the Light that Discovers him to the World, by which all Consciences ought to be Directed is always the same, and never Suggests Different things, so that Differences of Religion are owing to Men's not apprehending, or not Obeying it.*

The Difficulties that Remain to be cleared from this Discourse seem to me to be these; First How by the Principles maintained in it, a Reformation is Practible. Secondly, How to make Provision in point of Reason, that supposing Reformations, Reasonable and Practicable, yet that the Church be not Reformed into a Chimæra, it indeed often falls out that Society's are Sick in the Head, because that those that Sit in the Chair, having the greatest Affluency's of Honour and Wealth are aptest to be Corrupted, and bear hard upon the inferiour Rank, whence the Difficulties of Reformations arise, because they ought to Commence from the Head; that so by proper and Regular Conveiances they may Run thro' and Circulate in the Body. For irregular Reformations (like unwholsome Phisick) rather Disorder the Body than Cure the Disease; this seems to be the Difficulty which thus in it's fullest force lies against the Principles of this Discourse, which gives the Superior an Authority, and Power in point of Conscience to Check Private Suggestions of Male-Contents against the Publick: when they break out into such Overt-Acts, as are fatal to it's Peace; but notwithstanding this I think Reformations in the Case of Abuses are practicable by the same Measures, and upon the same Grounds that Men first Formed themselves into Societies; for as the Sense of their Personal infirmities gather'd them into Societies, and the inequality of their Powers, and

Humours



Humours whereby they might Prey upon one another, taught them Government for their Common Defence, even so the smart of Abuses and Grievances, in a settled Society, teacheth them to Unite their Endeavours for Relief, with this Difference that Societies in Fears, or in forming appoint their Head, to whom they will Submit and by whom they will be Governed.

But in the Case of Redressing Grievances, they only apply to the conduct and Direction of that Supreme Head which they have already owned, both because of the Obligations of Difference and Obedience, they have Engaged themselves in, and because the endeavouring a Publick Change without the higher Powers, wou'd Create ill Blood betwixt the Sovereign and Subject. and raise greater Grievances than it could Redress; therefore all Grievances are to be borne, that are less Vexatious to the Publick, than a Breach betwixt the Higher and Subordinate Powers; but because no Circumstances of Society or Government can shake Men loose of these Principles of Nature and Preservation which at first inclined them to Community; that State being Designed to Strengthen and not to Enervate the Obligation of these Principles, if the higher Powers will not upon Humble and due Application made to them, relieve the Oppressions and Grievances of the Subject, that are Really and Notoriously so, then the People being in such a Case Destitute of a Father and in such a State of Nature as they were when they first went into Society and Government, may Act the Part of the higher Powers. *Pro hac Vice* themselves; and may as Lawfully and Reasonably Relieve themselves from Affliction and Grievances by Council and Defensive Arms, as they could at first Embody and Herd under the Covert of Government, to avoid Anarchy and Confusion.

The higher Powers in such a Case Re-invest the People with that Authority they had in the State of Nature, and must Virtually own their Relieving themselves of such Vexatious Grievances, to be *re ipsa*, as Justifiable, as their Submitting to their Sovereignty and Protection at first: So that *Renvente Magistratum*, Reformation in such a case Commence from the Higher Powers, since they Derive from the same Fountain with Sovereignty it self, *viz.* the Appointment of God, and the Voice of the People, Represented in a Lawful Assembly.

Neither

Neither has the Supreme Powers in being, any more Authority to hinder the Peoples doing themselves Justice in this Case, than they could have to stop, or prevent their Associating, and growing into Communities at first; for such is the fickle and uncertain State of Affairs in the World, that the best Scheme of Government can never keep them in one stay; but Societies however well fenced, by particular Forms of Polity, finding them Incompetent to Answer the designed ends, are often forced upon the use of those Principles, and Politicks, which at first taught them Society in the General.

Mankind can never Disband, but may Shift the Scheme; Thus the *Romans* being tired of Monarchy, changed it into a Common Wealth: Thus the *Saxon Heptarchy* was after the Conquest changed into an *English* Monarchy, when the *Tarquins* were Banished from *Rome*, and Monarchy with them; this Revolution commenced from the Higher Powers; tho' the King had no hand in it, otherwise than by their Male-Administration, giving the occasion to it; because it proceeded from the People Acting in that Capacity, and by that Authority, in which, and by which they Acted when they first engaged in any Society, or stoop't to any Government: For that must be reckon'd the Sovereign Authority upon Earth, which next to God gives being to Government it self.

Neither can the Body of the People take this Power, of thus Asserting themselves upon them, but in the case of such Heinous, and Pernicious Grievances, as Evidently, and Inevitably tend to their Destruction, by Disbanding their Government, and Dissolving the Community; for no smaller evils can in likelihood reduce them to a State of Nature, in which Circumstances the use of this Power without the Magistrate in being, is only allowable, it being better in Lighter matters, to bear any thing, Than to kindle feud betwixt Magistrate and People; because in those matters which admit of Debate, where the Right is Disputable, a Kingdom, or Nation will be apt to go into Factions, divide their Powers, and make Head against it self, to its own Ruine; but in such Destructive Grievances, which without distinction, Sweeps all Rites of Sovereignty, and Subjection away at once, which Jumbles Sacred, and Prophane things  
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into one common *Mass*: Then forasmuch as all Interests are at Stake, and all on one side, there is no danger of such a *Division* as would *Embroid* a Nation, or Kingdom, in War or Blood; and this it was that made our late Revolution at home less Bloody than it would have been, among ourselves even because the common Interest was all on one side: This Consideration effectually checks all Cabbals, and Whisperers of Sediton in private Clubs, or Conventicles, which is commonly Consecrated with a shew of Conscience; because no Personal Interests, nor private Advantage, can Authorize a Breach with the Magistrate in being in any Society; because that breach wounds the publick, more than the Advancement of a private Interest can profit it; and because Conscience being a Light from Heaven, that directs Men to the best in all Capacities, can never Consecrate, nor Justifie any publick dis-service with a private Emolument: Besides, it is hardly presumeable, that the Emminent Danger or Desperate Condition of the Sacred, and Civil Affairs of a Kingdom, or Nation, should only enter into the thoughts of some few; perhaps Obscure Persons, far enough removed from those Posts of Business in the Common Wealth, which open Mens Prospect into the Counsels and Management of the World: But if it be so, and the evils be certain and pernicious, these Persons ought to Address the Sovereign Powers to divert them; if the Head be Sick, and will give no Direction, and the Body ready to perish with Contagion, then the People are to Reform, and to look to themselves, according to the measures here already Prescribed, *viz. In Council upon the Maturest Deliberation*; and this was the Method the Council and Parliament of *England* took in the late change.

From hence then it appears how Reformations in a State, Kingdom, or Common Wealth are Practicable, even when the Head is Sick and cannot, or Stubborn and will not, give any Direction in Matters of Publick Concernment.

It Remains now that we Consider whether Reformations are Practicable in the *Church*, by those Principles that maintain a Power in *Church* Governours in point of Conscience, to punish Delinquents against her, in order to clear this, I think my self Obliged to take Notice, that as there is no Universal Civil Sovereign of Divine Appointment,



pointment, but every Nation and Kingdom, has a Power within it self of making it's own Laws, and ending it's own Debates, even so there is no Universal sacred Superiour, to give Laws or Receive Appeals.

The Popes Claim has been so often Baff'd that I shall not name it, but every National *Church* appoints it's own Rites, and Ends it's Controversies or by a General Council.

And as Common Reason and Natural Justice is the great Charter of all Civil Societies, so Divine Revelations that are truly so, are the Grand Charter of all Sacred Corporations and Body's; and as who ever wou'd pretend to Universal Civil Sovereignty, and shew no Reason for it, but assert it by Methods of Blood and Cruelty would be Opposed and Ridiculed by all Crowned Heads; even so who ever offers at a Universal Spiritual Lordship over the World, and can shew no Revelation for it, but Assert it by *Anathema's*, and a Sacred sort of Tyranny ought to be Treated with Scorn and Contempt, and with a Holy Zeal Laug'd out of Christendom.

The First Reformers then from *Popery* especially in these Kingdoms, tho' they might for Peace sake First apply to *Rome* for Relief, yet they were under no Obligation of Conscience to do so, both because that Obligation is of Force in things Sacred, only where there is a Divine Right proved, and because the Difference that for some Ages was paid to that *See* by the Christians of these Kingdoms, was rather Extorted from them by the Power Paramount of that Court, contrary to the Fundamental Laws and Statutes of these *Churches* and *Nations*, particularly the Statute of *Clarendon* and others, than Submitted and Consented to, by any Act and Deed of their own; so that these *Churches* might, and did pursuant to a Principle of Conscience, Reform themselves without Regard had to *Rome*.

I do know and own; that there is no known and Allowed Code that contains all the Principles of Reason and Natural Justice, whereby the several sets and Civil Societies of Mankind are or ought to be Governed, which gives them a great Latitude in Modelling themselves without Respect had to the particular *Maxims* and *Schemes* of one another, neither do they offer at Unity further than that of common Justice which is the Breath of Mankind, and secures them in their

their Commerce; whereas in Religion and Revelation, especially among Christians there is an approved Code, viz. *The Holy Bible which contains Principles of belief and Precepts for Practice, to be Received by all who insist themselves in that Holy Profession, and all Christians must aim at a Unity in these Principles and Precepts, both to purchase the reward of their Religion, and to Contradistinguish them from the Heathen and Mahometan World.*

These Principles don't fall under the Cognizance and determination of the *Church*, to add too, or diminish from them, much less than Acts of Parliament fall under the decision of the People, who are to be Concluded by them: But whereas different Nations have different Customs and Modes, which are Expressive either for the Gravity or Looseness of their Demeanour, it seems Reasonable to allow every National *Church* a Power to appropriate to their Publick Worship, such Rites and Modes as among them are Signs and Expressions of the most Serious and Solemn Gravity and Decency; and these Receiving the force of a Law by the Authority of that National *Church* do in Conscience Oblige all the Subjects of that Nation, and Members of that *Church* at least to a Non-resistance of, if not to a Compliance with them, and in this Case where the Soul is not in Danger, it's Principles of Belief and Practice which must carry it to Heaven, being firm and untouch'd by humane Authority, Private Conscience must give way to Publick Conscience, no less than a Private Member of Parliaments Opinion must give way to the cry of an Act that is Voted by a full House: For what in Civil Matters is common Reason, that in Sacred things is common Conscience, and as Civil Acts and Statutes are no more than the Common Reason of the Society Digested into Rules for Practice; so Ecclesiastical Canons are no more than the common Conscience of the *Church* Digested into Rules for Christian Life and Worship; and these Canons so qualified as not to Interfere with those Principles of Faith and Practice contained in the Holy Oracles, which are the Rock of our Salvation, do certainly Oblige the Conscience; for I take an Obligation of Conscience to lye, where ever the Peace and Unity of the Church is concerned: Therefore if a Man can Consistently with the Belief of his Creed, and Practice of that System of Christian Precepts contained

in the Gospel, Worship according to the *Establish't* Rules and Mode, he ought in Conscience rather to do so, than venture to break Charity, and Rend the Church by Separating from it.

We daily see the Dismal Effects of Mens Inadvertency in this point, for to keep their Consciences clean from a Ceremony, they clog them with Schism; Thus *they strain at Gnatts, and swallow Camels*, whilst Charity cooles in the Breasts of those Christians, who will not Worship at the same Altar, with the same Mouth and Voice.

Where a Mans Belief is sound, and Obedience of the great things of the Law safe, I look upon it to be as Impertinent for him to offer the Suggestions of his private *Conscience*, against the *Establish't* Modes of a National Church, and turn *Dissenter* upon that Score, as it were for a private Subject to turn Rebel to the State wherein he lives; because his private Reason whispers to him, that its Constitution is in some smaller things Defective; and why the Church should not have Power to quell a Schism that Commences from Ceremonies, by her Authority, as well as the State can Stifle a Rebellion, that is kindled by the fickle Madness of the People, I could never as yet learn.

It's true indeed, The Iniquity of Separation in a Church, does not wound the Subjects of a Kingdom in the same Interests, that Rebellion in a State doth; for the one touches Mens Souls and Consciences, the other reacheth only their Persons and Fortunes; therefore the Authorities, by which they are Punished, are different, *viz.* Sacred and Civil; but as the Civil Authority can't often be otherwise Secured from the Mischief of a Pestilent Member, than by Death, or some Corporal Mulct; so the Sacred Authority can't often otherwise Secure the Church, than by turning *Delinquents* that way, out of all Capacities, and Posts of Business, wherein they might do her any Dis-service: And when the Principles and Precepts of the Gospel, as they are delivered by Christ and his Apostles in the Sacred Records, are upon the Legal Establishment, and these only Preach'd, and Recommended to the People by the *Establish't* Clergy, without Coyning a new Article, or Enjoyning a new Precept: And when the *Canons*, Respecting the Conversation of Clergy

and People, are Unexceptionable, as to their Encourageing of Virtue and Piety; and this in the Main allowed by *Disſenters* themſelves, I do not ſee what general good end can be attained by an Indefinite Indulgence, ſince the *Canons* now in force againſt Vice, are thereby Relaxed, and Enervated, the Diſcipline of the Church loſt, ſeveral Doors being thereby open'd to eſcape its Edge, and Men thereby being Encouraged to live looſe of any Rules, Wickedneſs becomes Alamode, and the publick is loſt in a Flood of Debauchery.

Moreover, ſince the Reformation of theſe National Churches from *Rome*, it is Obſervable, That none, that ever Reformed from the *Episcopal* Scheme, appointed Sacred Rules that Encouraged Virtue more, or Cramp't Conſcience leſs, or gave leſs occaſion to an endleſs Diviſions in Churches, than that of *England*.

The truth of this may appear from a Survey of the ſeveral Forms of *Presbitery*, *Independency*, *Anabaptiſm*, *Sweet-fingers*, *Quakers*, and that Numerous ſet of *Seſts* that Spawn'd from a Needleſs and Irregular Reformation from *Episcopacy*: All theſe brought their own Death into the World with them, becauſe they derived being from the overthrow of a Government, which is much Older than themſelves, and answered all the ends of Chriſtianity better.

But the true Reaſon of the Folly, and Unſucceſſfulneſs of theſe Sub-reformations, and Sub-diviſions of the Church, I take to be this, even becauſe the *British* and *Irish* *Episcopacy* (I ſpeak ſince the Reformation) did not Impoſe ſuch Hardſhips in matter of Religion, upon all, or any of the Inhabitants of theſe Kingdoms, as to give good ground of a Revolt from her Communion, they not being by Virtue thereof, in any hazard of thoſe Principles and Precepts, the loſs whereof, can only Juſtify the Inferiour Members of the Church, in a Separation from the Superiour, and Governing Powers, as it was in the caſe of our Revolt from *Rome*.

And this made Reformation thrive ſo ill in their hands, that it became a Monſter with many Heads, Diſſenters from *Episcopacy* being puniſhed in their own kinde, ſpawning thoſe Vermin from their Boſom, that eat out their Bowels; becauſe when a Reformation commences not from the Neceſſity of ſupporting the Church

Church in its fundamental Doctrines, and ancient Government, but only from a show of *Conscience* with a respect to Rites and Ceremonies, which are only of a Local and Temporary Obligation ; it hath not, it cannot, have any fix'd Limits, nor can it be confin'd, but must be as loose and boundless as That *Conscientious* Liberty that gave Birth to it.

For where the Reformation derives not from the Necessity of the Church ; nay, of the Life of *Christianity* it self, as ours from *Rome* did, but from the humour of the Reformer Cloak'd with *Conscience* ; God knows where it will stop ;

This was the very thing that broke *Presbitery* into *Independency* ; That into *Quakerism*, &c. till they lost all Face and Form of Government, and there with that Discipline which would have check'd the shameful, but prevailing Lewdness of this Age and these Nations ;

That the Subjects of a State or Kingdom who are Link't together by one Chain of civil Government, should all also be under one Form of sacred Government wou'd certainly contribute very much to their happiness, especially since Princes became Nursing Fathers to the Church ; and since sacred and civil Rights are upon the same Legal Establishment ; For thereby the Prince might exert his Paternal care towards all his Subjects, by the same measures of Government, whether in their Civil or Ecclesiastical Capacities, and the Subjects might *cæteris paribus* owning his Ecclesiastical, as well civil Laws, indifferently and equally pretend to a share of his Esteem, and Favours ; when Honours and Preferments are a dealing ; whereas when he has one Sett of *Religionists* upon the Establishment, and the other upon sufferance, what he do's in favour of those upon sufferance must be beside the Canons Ratified by his own Authority in behalf of the Establish'd Party, and this frets and disobliges them ; And whatever he gains in the Esteem of one, he loseth with the other : so that the Subjects of a Nation ( since there is no avoiding Heats from this *Topic*, which often flames out into War ) ought in *Conscience* to endeavour a Union in sacred things, to avoid putting such hardships upon a Prince in point of Government ; And to avoid the dismal effects of it, upon the Publick :

And



And that this Union which w<sup>o</sup>ld be of such general good influence upon Prince and People is attainable by the Subjects of these Nations, is apparent by our almost universal consent in Fundamentals, and since these Fundamentals are as pure upon the side of the Establish'd Party, if not more; as upon that which is upon sufferance, is is much more consistent with *Reason* and *Conscience* to conform the *Conventicle* to the Church; than to sink the Church, *absit omen*, into the *Conventicle*; Neither can a sett of *Male-content* Clergy of these Nations pretend, as good a Warrant to Reform from the Governing *Ecclesiasticks* among us, as we did from *Rome*; even for this Politick Reason, besides our consent in Doctrinals, because we had no civil Union in Political Government with *Rome*, therefore could do Society nor Mankind no harm that way, whereas the Subjects of a Nation cannot take upon them to Reform the Church of it, of themselves; without offering its Civil Government some violence; or putting some unnecessary and pernicious hardships upon Prince or People, or both; than which nothing can be more against *Conscience*: If indeed they shew a Commission from Heaven, well vouch'd to alter and change the World, I'll submit; but till then they cannot honestly touch an Establishment, which Answers all the ends of Morality and Religion better than any that they would introduce, as experience has proved in any Efforts, that they have made that way; For what they did in that particular, being only to advance a Party, and gratifie the Religious Itch of the giddy People, (The substantials of Christianity being provided for by the wisdom of our Reformers before) it had only this effect upon whom, it took, *viz.* to make them Lofly and Pharisaical in their Tempers, and swell them with spiritual Pride, insomuch that they scorn all others as Babes and Punnies in Religion, whereof they w<sup>o</sup>ld make a Monopoly, for I hardly know any of these Sub-divided Cabbals; but what confine Christ and his Sufferings as to the benefit of them, according to the *Romish* Example, to their own Club.

It is no small accession of Reputation and Honour to our first Reformation that scitied in *Episcopacy*, That it was a Restoration of our Church to her Ancient Rites and Basis. a Re-inforcing those Acts and Statutes, towards the throwing off the Papal Jurisdiction which  
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were first made against its Growth, particularly the Statute of *Carlisle*, made in the Reign of *Edward the First*, it was Declared, *That the Church of England was Founded in the Estate of Prelacy within the Realm of England, by the King and Peers thereof; and that the several Encroachments of the Bishop of Rome, specified that All did tend to the Annulment of the State of the Church, and Dis-inheriting of the King, and Peers: Another Law tells us, That the Crown of England hath been so free at all times, that it has been in no Earthly Subjection, but immediately Subjected to God, in all things touching its Regality, and to no other, and ought not to be Submitted to the Pope.*

These, and such like Statutes, our Church was founded upon, at what time *Rome* began her Usurpations upon us; and to these she is now Restored by her own Authority, which she derives immediately from Heaven, without any Papal Mediations.

Whereas our Sectarian Reformers, can plead no Ancient Laws, nor Statutes of these Kingdoms, for the several Schemes they set up; They do plead *Conscience* but in vain, according to what appears from this Discourse, since their private *Consciences* ought to be Determined by the Common *Conscience* of the Church wherein they live, whilst they are sound in their Belief, and safe in their Practice of the great things of the Law, by Confirming to the Establishment; and I hope they do not offer at a new Commission from Heaven, to set up new Churches in these Nations; which, but within these Hundred years, or thereabouts, our fore-Fathers knew nothing of, and had no Precedent in these Kingdoms.

But as the Scheme of these Conventicles was perfectly new, and Unexampled in these Nations, or any where else, before Mr. *Calvins* Days; so the Clergy that serve in them, are a new set of Priests, Sprung, I am afraid, from the Earth, who can give no Tolerable account of the Derivation of their Orders, but boldly Father themselves upon Christ and his Apostles, at Fifteen Hundred years Discontinuance.

These are bold Measures, of Reforming that Introduce New Churches, new Priests, all at once, and may be much more Fatal to those, that now are so fond of them, Hundred years hence, than  
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they can be to the now Establishment; for by the same Methods a Hundred or Two Hundred years hence, some fresh Inspirado's may sprout from the People, and take up Holy Orders, and a Form of Church Polity at their Foot, and cry down *Presbitery*, *Independancy*, &c. as Antichristian Policy, an Enemy to the Kingdom of Christ, to the Operation of Effectual Grace upon the Souls of Believers, and to true Christian Liberty in a Gospel Dispensation: Nor can I see what Politicks the Sectarians have left themselves, in their proceedings with the Establish'd Church, to beat down such a set of Enemies, if they should make Head against them.

Whereas we in our Reformation having retained the Ancient Doctrines and Government of the Church, together with an Uninterrupted Derivation of Orders, have at once shew'd, that the Church we Reformed from, was Corrupted in most of these, and prevented any making head against us, unless they can shew their Credentials immediately from Heaven, by Miracle for so doing, or prove their Authority to Act in a Sacred Capacity, by a genuin Derivation of it, through the several Ages of the Church, from Christ who is the Head of all Spiritual Powers.

For whoever makes a separation from a National Church that maintains all the uncorrupted Genuin Principles, and Precepts of Christianity, which carry a Soul safe to Heaven, and pleads *Conscience* for his separation from that Church upon the score of Ceremony, ought either to Establish or Engage with another; whose Doctrines and Rules cannot be Excepted against, by the Nicest *Conscience*; otherwise he only frames Weapons, to pull down his Church, by the same means That he laid hands on the Established.

To avoid which mischief, and for the satisfaction of tender *Consciences*, the *Presbyterians* threw off Bps. and Decent Ceremonies by whole sale, but retained a gradation of Synodical power in a Nation or Province, The *Independent* went a step farther, and Confin'd all Ecclesiastical power to each Congregation severally; The *Quakers* those unaccountable Inspirado's whom I know as little of as they do of themselves, tis pity to Name 'em, but they all agreed to strip the Worship of God naked as a friendless Orphan, inso much, that as many



ny took offence at the nakedness of the *Conventicle*, as at the Decency and Order of the Church, but not finding these Politicks successful enough in the Design of them, *viz.* their Defence against any Invasion of *Male-contents*, whenever any *Seſtarians* got into the Chair; They fell about Hampering of *Conscience* with Mulcts and Penalties, and forcing an Uniformity in their Discipline and Worship, by much more severe methods than that Church, from whose soft Politicks that way; they first took the occasion of offence, witness the *Anabaptists* in *Munster*, and the *Presbyterians* now of *New England*, who in point of *Conscience*, treat the *Tender Consciences* of *Disſenters* from them with Gibbets and Ropes; so that their own Practice vouches the Truth of the Principles of this Discourse, *viz.* that no sacred Society, can subsist without a power in its Governours in point of *Conscience* to check *Conscientious* Delinquents against it, but their Opinions in this Matter alter according to their own circumstances of being in the Chair or upon Sufferance; for the same power that they must assert when in the Chair in order to keep them safe there, will crush them to Death when upon Sufferance, so that they must either have Two *Consciences*, or One large one to serve both the Turns of their Establishment, or Indulgence.

Neither can it be easily imagin'd that the wise Governour of the World has Authoriz'd a separation made by a set of Private Members from any Sacred or Civil Society wherein they live, unless it be either apparent that the Governours of that Society are Usurpers, using their power in its Destruction, or they can prove their Commission to make the change by unexceptionable credentials from Heaven, otherwise God would have licenc'd Men at pleasure to unravel that State of Life, *viz.* Society, which is of his own appointment, an Instrument of the greatest happiness to Mankind; so that upon this consideration and others, I am apt to believe that *Liberty of Conscience*, so much in the mouths of the People, is by the wisdom of Heaven left in the hands of spiritual Governours for the management of it; That is, that they may in each Nation or Province by their own Authority, without respect to any Higher or Foreign jurisdiction, appoint such Modes and Rites of Worship, as  
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best consist with, and conduce to a Holy and Religious Life, and the Practice of Christianity within such a District, and Compass;

This of one National Churches being exempted from the power and censure of another, seems to me a much truer Notion of *Liberty of Conscience*, than the vulgar acception of it, *viz.* that every Man by virtue of a Light of *Conscience* within him, has a Commission to separate from a sacred Society, when every thing in use there, does not please him; for the *Dissenters* themselves will not allow any particular Members of their own to Sub-divide from them, without censure and punishment, even upon a Plea of *Conscience*; which yet they urge for their separation from the National Church.

Tho' the Establish'd Church has as Coercive a power over them in the General, as they have over their particular Members, for what we can yet learn from their Writings, or Reasonings with us upon that Subject,

There is indeed one great Grievance Conniv'd at in these Nations, which widens our Differences, Cools Charity, and Unites all the Bands of Sacred Society, and that is several Sets, besides the Establish't, of pretended Clergy-men; who Derive their Orders and Commissions to do Sacred Offices, different Ways, and cry out they have a *Mandamus* from Heaven: This makes one Set of the People believe, that their Teachers only are Gods Commissioners; another believes that theirs only are the Ambassadors of Heaven; Thus eagerly Maintaining the Commissions of their Respective Leaders, and Church Officers, One *Herd* *Worships* at Mount *Garizim*, the other at the Temple of *Jerusalem*, till their breach become as wide as that of *Jew* and *Samaritan*, to the Scandal of their Common Christianity; sure they cannot plead *Conscience* against Episcopal Ordination, as Antichristian and unlawful; unless they Unchurch the Church for 1600 Years together at one stroke, and plead that Christ had no Evangelically Establish'd Church untill Mr. *Calvin* Modell'd it at *Geneva*: If they allow an Episcopal Derivation of Orders to be valid, why don't they Receive them; unless they be ashamed to Oppose Episcopacy by Virtue of a Power Convey'd from it self; Therefore they take an Authority derived from New *Atlemtis* or *Eutopia*, to sink the Episcopal Order and Decency in the Bitch of the People, and raise themselves into it;

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What endless and irremediable Confusions wou'd it breed in the State, just like those in the Church; if the Magistrates differ'd as much in the Expositions of Laws, and Administration of Justice upon their Benches, as the several Sets of Clergy do among us in their Accounts of the Divine Law, and pleaded different Commissions for so doing: If where Monarchy is Establish't, a parcel of its Subjects should put on an *Aristocratical* Power, and give Commissions to a few Men of their own Kidney, to Expound the Laws to them, and appoint them Methods, and Measures of Obedience to the Higher Powers; it wou'd make just such a Rent in the State, as a parcel of *Presbyterians*, giving Commission to some of their own Creatures to Explain the Scripture Rules, concerning Church Government, do's in the Church, where Episcopacy is Establish't; nor can it be pleaded in this Case among us, that the Interpretation of the Sacred Laws of Heaven is more the Right, and in the Power of the Discenting Clergy, than the Civil Laws of the Nation are in the Power of a parcel of Usurping Male-content Subjects; because it is more apparent that the King, who is the Civil Legislator, hath committed the Exposition of his Statutes to a certain Set of Judges, appointed for that use, than it appears that God has only appointed the Establish'd Clergy to Interpret the Divine Law: This answer might have had some force in the Mouths of our Reformers from Rome, when they made it appear, That the *Romish* Doctors had Mis-interpreted the Grand Character of the Church, and Imposed their Glosses upon a great part of the World *Subanathemate*, where they had no Power: But among us, where even the Male-contents in the Church, own that there is no such things put upon them *De necessitate Salutis*, it can be of no force at all; for by their owning the Interpretation of Church Establish't, of those Articles of Faith, and Precepts of Obedience, upon which Mens happiness turns, to consist with their Eternal Welfare and Salvation, they have given up all Plea of the Necessity of an Interpretation of their own, and the Peoples Receiving it; besides, as there is no Dangerous Article Imposed upon the People, by the Authority of the Establish't Church, so the Establish't Clergy are the Lineal, and Legal Successors of those, who in all Ages

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had the right of Preaching, and Interpreting the Divine Law, to the Christian World; who tho' in some Ages they might, and did Corrupt it; yet they never lost, but always Transmitted to their Legitimate Posterity, a right to do the Church Justice, according to the Grand Charter given her from Heaven.

Therefore it must be Usurpation in any of these Kingdoms, either to derive a Commission to Officiate in Sacred things, otherwise than by the Establish'd Church, or thereby to obtrude other Doctrines upon her People, than what are contained in her *Creeeds* and *Articles*.

Thus when the Church had secur'd the Souls of her particular Members, by sound *Orthodox Principles*, and Holy Just *Canons* (in-somuch that the most Sober, and Religious Dissenters, do but Materially Believe, and Practice what she enjoyns) it is no more Violence, nor Persecution in her, to treat her Mutinous, Obstinate Children with *Excommunication* and *Banishment*, Than for the State to *Outlaw* and *Proscribe* such of their Members, as only wou'd receive the Benefit of their Laws and Immunities, and return no Offices of Fealty or Homage; or for a private Person to turn another out of his Conversation, of whom he were in any probable danger, either of his Life or Fortunes: And as there is a better Plea of *Conscience* in the behalf of the State, or private Person, thus to treat a Delinquent, than he can have for offering an Offence; so the Church can better plead *Conscience* for Proscribing an Obstinate Clamorous Enemy, than he can for offending her, always provided his Soul be safe in her Communion.

For sure *Liberty of Conscience* cannot be the property of private Persons only, to secure themselves, and Authorize their Contempt of the Publick; but much rather sure it should be, and really is the Privilege of Communities, to secure them from the Insults of a Saucy or Unreasonable Delinquent: And I believe this to be the mistake that Men generally Labour under, *viz.* To give private Persons rather than Communities, a right and claim to *Liberty of Conscience*, whereas considering that all *Liberty* Inclines to Disorder, it is much safer in the Hands of the Community, than with single Persons; for then it's presumed that it will be Temper'd with Judgment and Discretion,

cretion, and will answer some good end; whereas in private Breasts it is commonly heated with furious Zeal, and Inflames the publick.

But if by *Liberty of Conscience* be meant an Exemption from any Restraint upon the mind by any Authority, but what is Divine; or a Latitude whereby and wherein Men may Exert their Reason in it's freest Discourses, always within the Compass of Divine Revelations that are truly so, then for as much as the Establish'd Church Indulges this with as much freedom, and more safety, than any who refuse her Communion on the one Hand, or Dissent from it on the other, it is Folly to incline to either by leaving Her in quest of *Liberty of Conscience*.

The *Papists* check not only all *Liberty of Conscience*, to Dissent from them by Inquisitions and Anathema's, but in their Devotions, Tye the People to an unthinking Blind dependance upon the Priests Lip, insomuch that they can offer no Reasonable Service to God, because they are not Conscious of what they do, or of the suitableness of the Service either to the Majesty of God, or the Condition of the Suppliant.

The *Dissenters* of all sorts in these Kingdoms, tho' they have not Wrapt up their Devotions in an Unknown Tongue, yet they have Lock't them up so in the Breasts of their Teachers, that the People have no Liberty to Exercise their Thoughts upon the Reasonableness of their Service before Hand, not to Consider and Examine the Worth of their Sacrifice, but must Tye their minds to the Loose and Arbitrary Expression of the Minister; and I know not what can more either be Wilder, the Mind, or Cramp *Conscience* more effectually than this Method, because it Checks the Freedom of Judgment by Tying one Man so close to the Suggestions of another, that he must either not join with him at all, and so Loose his design of hearing him, or join with him at all hazards of his Impertinency on the one Hand, or the loss of his Native Freedom of thinking on the other, thus are they punished by a great Restrstraint of Liberty; who under Covert of *Liberty of Conscience*, desert the Communion and Service of the Church, for that of the *Conventicle*; for in *Extemporary Performances* whatever Liberty the Speaker may enjoy the Hearers are Hamper'd unless they will Construe the Freedom of his Effusions to be their Liberty of Conscience.

And



And since in all Societies many in some Cases, must be under the Influence of one, or a few, sure in the Case of *Publick Devotion*, that mighty Concern, it is safer to be under the Influence and Direction of the *Church* Represented, appointing Liturgies and Forms of Devotion, than to depend upon the Direction of a single *Pastor* in each Congregation.

The Truth of this is in some Measure vouch'd, by the General Rules Contained in the Directory appointed for the Regulation of the Devotions of the *Kirk of Scotland*, for where General Rules are appointed for, and attain some good Ends, viz. *To prevent Wild Enthusiasm and Empty Follies in Devotion*, certain it is that the more Particular these Rules are (Considering the Loose minds of Men that they are to Influence) the better that End is attained.

Hence it is, that more have Fallen from *Presbitery, Independency* and *Anabaptism*, into the Religious Frenzie of *Quakerism*, than from the Establish'd Church, and that because their Rules were too General, and might be Interpreted so, as to Countenance any kind of Extemporary Devotions, whereas those of the Established Church are more Particular, especially with Respect to *Publick Devotions* (which Commonly either give, or are the Occasion of the first Breach of Ecclesiastical Unity) Witness the *Gospels, Epistles* and *Collects* in the *Common-Prayer Book*, where we find the Word of God first Read in the *Genuine Text*; and then *Metaphras'd* into Holy and Edifying Prayers, and where these are not either used or own'd as fit to be used, there can be no Communion with the Establish'd Church; First, because that as deriving immediately from the Word of God, being a better and fuller Transcript thereof than any *Extemporary Devotions* can be, is presumed to be more agreeable to the Revelations of Heaven, in that particular, than any other.

Secondly, Because even *Conscience* in such a Scheme of Devotions hath more Room to Exert it's Liberty (by comparing them with the Word of God, and Judging them according to the Divine Canon within which all Christian Liberty of Conscience must be Bounded) than it can have with either the *Recusants* or *Dissenters* from the Church, where the one is Wrapt in an unknown Tongue, and the other Arbitrary in the Teacher: So that it is plain that those must  
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miss their Design, who leave the *Church* to find any *Liberty* of *Conscience* allowed by God either in the *Mass* or *Conventicle*, for certainly that *Liberty* must consist rather in that Freedom which the mind enjoys, in Dilateing it self within the Compass of *Divine Revelations*, and the Rules of the Societies in which Men Live, than in an Ungovernable Wildness of the mind, whereby it Scorns the Direction of all Rules and Shifts it's Superiour, as often as any fresh Notions of *Liberty* seizes it.

And since it must be Confin'd within *Divine Revelations*, inso-much that no *Doctrines* must be proposed, Practice Recommended, nor Worship enjoy'd the People, but what are Consistent with them, and Conduce to the Welfare of Souls; it cannot Reasonably be sought nor pursued out of the Bosom of that *Church*, wherein even those who Desert Her, own that these things may be had.

In short wherever Men are in Danger of the loss of their Souls, that Danger they may Avoid and Flee from, by Virtue of a *Liberty of Conscience*, tho' thereby they break the Unity of a Society, but when they are in no hazard of their Happiness, I do not find that *Liberty of Conscience* can carry them further in the Breach of the *Churches*, Peace and Unity; because thereby no End can be attain'd Tantamount to the Evil the Society suffers by the Breach, neither are there any Restraints put upon Mens Native Freedom by Humane Authority, that consists with the *Divine Canon*, or their Duty towards God, that Destroy *Liberty of Conscience* otherwise there wou'd be no *Liberty of Conscience* in any Establish'd Society in the World, since all of them have Rules that Derive no Higher than Humane Prudence. And Mens *Liberty of Judging* consists in their Reasoning themselves into a Conviction of the Equity of those Rules that are Prescrib'd them, otherwise they wou'd be Acted like *Engines* and *Tools*, and the *Liberty of Acting* Consists in a deliberate Performance of Obedience, pursuant to that Conviction, now when the *Church* has taken care that her *Canons* as to the Equity of them are Unexceptionable and Obvious to the meanest Capacity, and that the Obedience of them promotes Peace and Piety; she has done all that is possible, to allow *Conscience* it's *Liberty*, and yet to Confine it within the Bounds of Reason and Duty, inso-much that whatever *Liberty* Men Indulge themselves in more than this,

may well Disband all *Churches*, and cause an infinite Divisibility in Christianity, but can Answer no good End, for those who *Descend* from any National Church in quest of *Liberty of Conscience*, cannot Live under it's Loose Influence, but must Incorporate, and submit to Rules that check it, perhaps more than the Constitution of the Church they separated from, unless they think no Rules of their own immediate Framing can confine *Conscience*, or that every Age & set of Mankind, should make and Suite *Canons* to their own *Standard of Conscience*, which is contrary to the Practice of the Church in sacred things, and the Custom of all Nations in Civil things these many Ages; for as the same Common *Conscience*, and the same common Reason is Transmitted from Parents to Children, so the same *Standard of Affairs* holds thro' several Ages, unless the Occasional Necessity of Affairs may alter the Case in some smaller Matters, as in the Church Different Ages, and Different Places may alter Modes, so in the State Positive Laws may be changed, Old Abolish'd and new Establish'd, whilst at the same time neither the Revelations of Heaven, nor Reason of Mankind is touch'd, but Remain the *Standing Pillars*, the one of the Church, the other of the State for ever.

But notwithstanding all the Care that our Spiritual Governours may, or have taken up the Maturest Deliberation in Council where the Spirit of God is promised, if any thing even belonging to the Skirts of Religion be Establish'd that Contradicts the Suggestions of the *private Spirits* of some *Male-contented*, and if the Church Censure them for Disobedience or Non-conformity, the People presently Raise a Hue and Cry, of Persecution and Clamour against their Spiritual Parents, as unnatural Persecutors for Endeavouring to Reduce them to their Duty by a Rod, when Perswasives fail.

If indeed their Governours treated them evil for well-doing, and would not give Ear to their *Sollicitations* and *Addresses* for Peace; if the Gospel were made a *Crime*, and Christians accounted *Criminals* for being so; or if Christianity, by our Constitution were so blended and daub'd with *Idolatry* and *Folly*, as Men could not Distinguish the *Inventions* of Men from the *Worship of God*; or if Honouring of God were a Disowning of *Cæsar*; or a Holy Life among us *Treason* and *Injustice*, as in the Primitive times it was accounted:

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Then indeed, forasmuch as it is the cause that makes Chastizement a *Crime* in the *Agent*, and a *Virtue* in him that *suffers* it, there wou'd be some ground for this Cry of Persecution; whereas it is so far otherwise, that whoever, even of the *Dissenters* becomes Pious or Loyal, it is rather by the Influence of the Principles, and Canons of the Establish't *Church*, than those of their own Club; the most Pious of them being of that Set, the most Dutiful Sons of the *Church*, so that if they Matterially perform what She enjoyns, but not Her way, like peevish Children, it is not for *Conscience*, but for *Humour* that they are Chastiz'd:

Besides, however this Method is Blacken'd, and made Odious, by a Cry of Persecution, when it is used by the Establish't National *Church*, it is Practis'd every Day in private Seperate Assemblies, and there it wears the name of *Evangelical Discipline*, and *Christ's* care of his *Flock*, *Pro deum atque hominum fidem*: That Partiality and Prejudice should thus make Men *Prævaricate*, to make the same Power *Exserted* by themselves *Christian Discipline*, and by the *Church* Persecution and Rage: If it be urged here, *Volenti non fit injuria*, every Member of these Separate Assemblies has given his Suffrage to it's Constitution; and therefore cannot complain of being dealt with according to it, and are not our Laws of the Peoples own making? Nay, did not those very People, or their Representatives, by a priour Grant, give their Suffrage to the Establishment of our National Church, which grant they have now against all *Conscience*, broken in setting up these very Assemblies, in Opposition to the Church?

Nor are the Members of Separate Assemblies Punishable, only by their Authority, for offending against the Law of God, but also for their Neglect, and Disobedience of the Rules of the Congregation: If their Ministers do not Preach, and Pray, and Administer *Sacraments*, according to their several *Directories*, they are Censurable, as well as for Drunkenness or Adultery; since it is so, that they have Power to Censure their Members, for offending against Rules that derive from *Humane Prudence*, why may not the Authority of the National *Church* reach and punish those Assemblies (since they bear as little proportion to a Nation as private Members do to them) for  
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Confronting her Authority, and Declaiming against her Discipline, and Rules; which, tho' they may derive from *Humane Prudence*, yet better Circumstantiated, being in a full, and free Council than any private Club can be; and all this without the Cry of Persecution:

But their *Consciences* can bear with the Persecution of their own private Conventicles, because their Offences that way do not reach their Persons, nor Fortunes; and when they are bore hard upon, and beaten out of one Assembly, their *Religion* and tender *Consciences* take Sanctuary under Covert of another; as for their *Estates* and Fortunes, they are upon the Common Bottom of Security, from the Laws of the Land, which don't Animadvert upon them, for Breach of such private Rules of Separate Assemblies, as being Unconcerned in them: Thus in extremity by one another, they take Sanctuary and Protection from that Establishment, whose Authority they Enervate by their Divisions: Thus also private *Consciences*, haveing fallen from the Common Standard of the Nation oftentimes Skulk under the several Sets, and Sub-divisions of Religionists in it; and not finding in all, or either of them their unknown, but Fancy'd Deity, they at last Inclined to *Libertinism*, *Atheism*, *Deism*, and that *Chaos* of Folly and Madneſs; which under the Vizard of Religion, Reformation and Conscience Distracts our Age and People.

Whereas by an *Universal Uniformity* in Worship and Religious Decencies and Content in *Doctrinals* maintained by such Methods as might Check the Ungovernable Liberty of these Nations; our Church together with our Common Christianity might Flourish, and Peace and Piety might Reign in these Lands; surely the Interest of Christianity in the General could not be so much Disserv'd, nor *Christian Conscience*, in the fullest Extent of it's Liberty so check't by a Confinement, by Moderate Mulcts and Penalties to the *Doctrines* and *Rites* of the Establish'd Church, as it is by the Growth of *Deism* and *Socinianism*, (the Natural Children of an indefinite Tolleration) one whereof denies the Divinity of Christ, the other Arraigns Christianity, with all Revealed Religion.

All the Violence that a check of *Liberty* in our Case can do to the *Christians* of these Kingdoms is, to confine them to the Belief of those

those *Doctrines*, and Obedience of that *Government* in the *Church*; which have been Received, and Obeyed, ever since *Christianity* first saw the Light; whereas this *Liberty* and *Toleration* Indulged to Humour indeed, instead of *Conscience* exposes *Christian Devotion*, which ought to be a Reasonable Service, to the Wildest *Enthusiasm*; and *Christian Doctrines* to the Assault, if not Conquest, of the most Foul and Abominable *Heresies*.

And when the Restraint is within the Confines of a *Church*, wherein, even the *Dissenters* own, Mens happiness is safe enough, and the *Liberty* so Indefinite, that no Man knows where he needs stop, the choice is easie betwixt a loose *Toleration*, and a Check of *Government* so Qualify'd; for had the Methods which our *Modern Libertines*, prescribe for the *Government* of Mankind, either in *Church* or *State*, been taken at first, there had neither *Church* nor *State* been at all, or at least not continued under one Form of *Government*, for Hundred years together; and what Miseries these Politicks would have exposed them to, is evident from the dear Rate that publick *Revolutions* cost them now: The same Measures which our now *Libertines* use to Unravel our *Church* and *State*, wou'd have stiff'd all Sacred and Civil Societies in the Birth at first: For why should Men have put any check of *Government* upon their Native freedom of Thinking and Acting, since God has made them Free Agents? And then might men have enjoy'd their freedom at the Rate of a *Brutish Unsociable Life*, and prey'd upon one anothers Goods and Persons pursuant to it.

Upon these, and such Considerations, I presume, I may safely be Determined, by any Impartial Judgment in this Case, Whether *Liberty of Conscience* be safer in the Breast of the *Community*, Impowering them to Check such Pernicious Enemies to Mankind, or in the Breast of every Man, Licencing him to Impugn *Government*, and Invade Society, which are the greatest Instruments of Mens happiness.

God Almighty himself, tho' he has Endow'd Men with a *Principle of Liberty*; yet he has check'd it from doing evil, without doing it Violence; and forasmuch as *Communities* are presumed to know



better, what makes for the publick Advantage, than private Members; sure they have a Power to check the *Liberty* of their Members from Invading themselves, without doing Violence to their Native *Liberty*; a Restraint then from doing evil, such as all Sin against God, all Unnecessary Disturbance of the publick Peace, Sacred or Civil, can be no Violation of *Christian Liberty of Conscience*.

Besides Confinement in Sacred things, relating to *Conscience*, by the Power of a Superiour, if it be any restraint upon *Liberty* at all, it is when it is probable that he Directs to as good things as it wou'd choose, and so all is safe; whereas an Indefinit *Toleration* leaves Men so full a *Liberty*, that it is many to one odds, if they choose right; and so their *Liberty* is hazarded by the Tyranny and Dominion of Sin; for as the Service of God is perfect Freedom, tho' it checks the Mind from the Committal, and Rescues it from the Power of Sin, so the Obedience of Equitable Civil Laws, and Ecclesiastical Canons is not Destructive of *Liberty of Conscience*, tho' it Bars and Prevents any Rebellion in the *State*, or Schism in the *Church*, by such means as Men dare not Offend in either; and oblidging Men to Obey honest inoffensive *Canons*, by Mulcts proportion'd to the Mischief of the offence, and Rewards suited to the Merit and Service of the obedience, is no more Persecution, than for God to engage the Homage of his Creatures by a prospect of Reward, and fear of Punishment; or for Parents to engage the Filial Reverence of their Children by their frowns or smiles, or a prospect of their Fortunes, or Disinheritance.

But People not considering the Mischief of *Division* to the *Church* and how much it is Wounded thereby, do in Case of *Dissenters* being Punish'd Commonly direct their *Compassion* that way, because their Sufferings are more Obvious to them, than what the *Church* suffers by them. tho' the Latter be much the greater Evil, for the *Church* may be Persecuted in Her Doctrines, Canons and Discipline, (tho' they more Effectually promote Mens Spiritual Interest than any Scheme of the *Dissenters*) by Indulging them a Liberty to Worship the same God tho' in a looser, and more Immethodical way than the Law has prescribed.

Thus

Thus it is Obvious to any considering Person, how much the Design and Interest of *Religion* and the *Church* is Baff'd, when in Compassion to tender *Consciences*, to Worship in a way different from the *Establish'd Mode*, *Altar is set up against Altar*, *Priests against Priests*, *Doctrins against Doctrins*, *Directories against Canons*, and against themselves, *Paul against Cephas*, and *Muckleton or Nailer against both*; by which means the Spiritual Pride and Passions of Mankind which *Christianity* was to Quell and Subdue, are Encouraged and gather Strength, nothing being more apt to Debauch Mankind into a Contempt of all Sacred Authority, than their own Interpretation of things Sacred, without the *Mediations* and Assistance of the *Priesthood*, whom God has Commissionated to *Signifie* and *Expound* his Will to the Rest of Mankind.

And sure if there be Danger from the *Clergy* of Imposing in things Sacred upon the Unthinking People, by the Authority of their *Convocations* and *Councils*, there is much more from the Peoples *Misinterpreting* the *Divine Canon* to their own Destruction, or making it a *Nose of Wax* to Serve and Countenance their Ambitious Designs of *Rebelling* against the *Priest* or *Magistrate*. Therefore our *Saviour* selected a Set of Men to Manage Spiritual Matters, and did not leave His *Gospel* as to the *Administration* of it to Mankind at large, lest they should Plead His Commission for the *Divisions* in Matters of *Religion*, and break the Peace by those very means, whereby He came to Establish a Lasting Concord among them.

The Design of the *Gospel* was indeed to Profelitate the People to *Christianity*, but not to Advance them to the *Priesthood*, that Office Requires, and in all Ages has had a peculiar Commission from Heaven, without which, none dare to meddle with Direction in things Sacred, pursuant to which all *Religious Assemblies* (Excepting those where *Enthusiasm* wholly prevails) are under the *Jurisdiction* and *Direction* of their *Clergy*; Therefore those *Texts*, to prove all things and hold Fast that which is Best, to let no Man Deceive us, to be ware of *False Prophets*, *Seducers*, *Deceivers*, to Judge of our Selves what is Right, cannot safely be so *Interpreted* as to Exempt the People from the Power and Direction of the *Priest*, and put them upon their own Conduct, otherwise they wou'd hold against

gainst all *Religious Societies* where the *Clergy* have any Authority, as well as against the *Establish'd Church*; and if so Constru'd might Disband the *Conventicle*, as well as Divide the *Church*; But I rather take these *Texts* to be an *Address* to the *Church*, to the *Priests* and *People*, Obligeing them to the Strictest Care and Circumspection in things Sacred, and particularly the Care of Supressing *False Prophets*, is the *Business* of the Governours and Pastors of the *Church*, who are at once to Expose the Folly of their *Tenets*, by the Soundness of their own *Doctrine*, and Censure them by their *Authority* and *Discipline*.

The *Doctors* of the *Church*, are by these *Texts* Obliged to a Strict Examination of the *Grand Charter* the Word of God, and to Impose nothing but it, and it's Native Consequences upon the *Belief* and *Practise* of the *People*; The *People* are to Adhere to those *Teachers*, who prove their Commission best, and deliver those *Doctrines* which are most Consistent with the *Analogy* of Faith in all Ages, which is *Latitude* enough for their *Conscience* and *Judgment* of discretion to Exert it Self in.

But there is always less Danger of the Peoples being Impos'd upon by those *Spiritual Pastors*, who prove their Commission to do Sacred Offices, by a Lineal Uninterrupted Succession of Ordination, than by those who cannot do so, because those who can, being Undeniably Christs Deligates Vested with his *Authority*, are above the meanness of a Holy Cheat and Pious Frauds to Recommend them, they need not Writ *Texts* for a Commission, nor move the *People* for a Call when they have none from God, whereas those who cannot prove their *Mission*, least their Office should be accounted Invalid, *Tanquam non habentis potestatem*, are forced upon such Artifices as are most pleasing to the *People*, to support their Esteem with them: Thus gaining their Affections to put a Cheat upon their Judgments, and make them believe that they are Gods Ambassadors sent to them, as he sent his Apostles abroad into the World to Convert it: And from hence, even from these Tricks and Shams, that some Imposters have us'd to delude the World into a Belief of their being *Christs Priests* and *Ministers*, when other Arguments fail them, proceeds all that *Enthusiasm*, and *Holy Frenzie*, which has Corrupted the Morals,   
cramp.

crampt the *Consciences*, defil'd the Religion, and Debauch'd the Devotion of too many of this Age.

Besides, when Peoples Value for their Pastors derives not from their Commission, but their abilities and performances, it Naturally Sinks the Holy Order, and advances *Enthusiasm*, whereof the one seems by God to be appointed as a Check upon the other; for by these means some Men set up for *Priests*, only with Lungs and Assurance, as Credentials from Heaven, and having catch't the People by their desire of Novelty. lead them Astray into what Precipices they please; from which, and their own Ruin, when the *Church* endeavours to reduce them by sound Discipline, they forthwith raise a Cry of Persecution, and a Clamour about *Liberty of Conscience*.

Which evil Wonderfully disturbs the Peace, and Distracts the People of these Nations; and perhaps may be justly charged upon our too Indefinite Indulgence in matters of Religion, for such Unlimited *Liberty* gives the People occasion to run into those excesses often times, which for the sake of the publick must at length be check't, by *Civil*, or *Church Discipline*; and yet when they are Animadverted upon by those Laws, the Suspension of, or Dispensing with which, occasioned the Mischief that is to be Redressed, They raise the cry for Impunity, because *Conscience* can't be forced.

To prevent which Inconveniency, I humbly offer, That *Toleration* is a Dis-service to true Religion, which in a National Church gives *Licence* to different Modes of *Worship*, and at the same time Enervates good Rules and Canons, which promote *Practical Holiness*, and an *Universal Charity*; because thereby the Substance of Religion: which consists in *doing good*, is lost for a *Wordy show*, and different expressing of it in *Worship*.

Nothing certainly can Compound with God, for the loss his Honour Sustains by the Violation of such *Rules* and *Discipline* as Encourage *Charity* and *Holiness*; nor with Men for the mighty Dis-service that is done to their Interest thereby: And yet it is almost Natural, I am sure very usual among us, for Men, whom an Indulgence has set free from the Received, and Establish'd Rules of *Wor-*

ship, to break the *Discipline* and *Canons* of the *Church*, and plead *Conscience* for an Exemption from that Jurisdiction which checks their Wickedness, no less than from those Rules of Worship, which as they say, Cramps their *Liberty*.

But allow *Conscience* cannot be forced, yet certainly it can live under the Influence of Rules, otherwise there can be no *Conscience* in any Established Society in the World: And since the *Canons* of the Established *Church* give it as large a Latitude in Inoffensive freedoms, as either the Word of God will warrant, or any Society that any can betake themselves to, can Reasonably allow; I don't see what *Liberty* any *Male-content* can gain to his *Conscience* by leaving the *Church*, unless he wou'd loose his *Conscience* quite, by turning such a *Sceptical loose Libertine*, as will not stand to the *Verdict* of his own *Judgment*, and Scorns all Authority of God and Man; such a one is neither fit for Heaven nor Earth, and I am unwilling to assign him a third place.

And if Measures for the right use of Liberty be taken from the Revelations of Heaven, then it is as presumable, that Spiritual Governours in Council take these measures right, as that private Consciences do, who under Pretext of *Liberty* withdraw from, and disown their Authority: Especially since Spiritual Pastors have a better Warrant and Commission to prescribe to Consciences, pursuant to the Charter of Heaven, than private Persons have to Expound for themselves without Respect to their Pastors; for if so, the Clerical Order, tho' of Divine Appointment wou'd be useles, and answer no end; which is not to be supposed.

I know there is a Set of *Christians* in the World, who have suffered Considerably by the Usurpations of their Spiritual Governours, and are Reduced into Slavery by their Tyranny, but for as much as these *Methods* of Hampering the *Consciences*, and Enslaving the Persons of the People, were the same, whereby the Triple Crown, and *Papal* Lordship over the *Christian* World was Raised and Advanced in a *National Church*, where that *Primacy* is pulled down, and She Reign Stated in Her own Rights, Independent of any *Foreign* Power, there is no hazard of Imposing upon, or Enslaving the Peoples *Liberty* to Serve any such End or Design.

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It's true the *Popes Universal Lordship*, and the *Peoples Universal Slavery* kept Peace ; for not having any Commission from Heaven for it, he must derive it from the Slavery and Subjection of the People, Extorted by *Force* and *Fraud* ; but our *Spiritual Governours* Aiming at no Power without the *Confines* of our own *Kingdoms*, are not *Forc'd* upon such *Tyrannical Artifices*, nor can they be greater than what the *Constitutions* of these *Nations* have made them; therefore must Content themselves with that power which they derive from *Scripture*, Unexceptionable Antiquity, and the Laws of the Land : And therefore too, it being *Morally Impossible* that they should have any thing in their *Consideration* and *Councils*, but the *Peace* and *Welfare* of that *National Church* wherein they cannot be greater, we ought to Receive the Direction of our *Consciences* from God by their *Mediation* ; That is from those *Rules* and *Canons* for *Holy Living*, which they in *Council* Assisted by Gods *Holy Spirit* Enjoin us.

*Universal Civil Primacy* over the World is Impracticable; by Reason of the *Hardships* and *Violence* that wou'd thereby be done, and *Accrue* to the *Respective Subjects* of each particular *Kingdom* and *Province*, and their *Rights* ; And the same Reason holding in *Matters of Religion* (by Reason of many *Impositions* necessary to Support that Scheme) made the *Churches* of *Brittain* and *Ireland* Sick of the *Pope*, and throw off his *Spiritual Monarchy*, and therewith those unreasonable *Impositions* which were so Fatal and Opposite to the *Civil* and *Christian Liberty* of the *Inhabitants* of these *Nations* : Whereas now our *National Church* and *State*, being by *Virtue* of our *Reformation* from *Rome*, a *Body* independent upon the *Direction* of any *Forreign Head*, and not in *Danger* of any *Slavish Impositions* that way, can, and may give *Directions* to all the *Inhabitants* of these *Nations*, according to the *Principles* of *Sound Reason* and *Religion*, which Oblige their *Consciences* to *Aquit* themselves well in their *Sacred* or *Civil Capacities*.

Nor is there any more *Danger* of the *Nations* being put upon, and Enslaved by a *National* or *Provincial Primacy* in things either *Sacred* or *Civil*, than there is of particular *Separate Assemblies*, suffering *Impositions* by their *Congregational Heads* ; If particular *Congregations*

*gregations* may Appoint a Scheme of *Government* and *Canons* for Life; Suppose not altogether against the great Charter, without Imposing upon the *Liberty* and *Conscience* of the Subject, certainly a *National Council* may Confirm that Scheme in the Church, which has held through all Ages, without offering Violence to *Conscience*, and if there be any Danger of Imposing upon the *Credulity* and *Conscience* of the People, 'tis rather by the *Pastors* of separate *Congregations*, than the Establish'd Governours of the Church, because the Latter being Possess'd of what they can expect from the Establishment, are presumed to Forward *Affairs* in their now Channel without any Uneasy Impositions, or Innovations; Whereas the other being low in Fortunes, are aptest to be Tempted, to Impose such things upon the People, as may promote their Designs of Popularity, Honour and Wealth, so that by these means Toleration of several Sets and Sects of *Religionists* becomes the greatest Instrument of Cramping the *Consciences*, and Imposing upon the Liberty of the People, for what ever Violence, *Conscience* can be supposed to suffer by Uniformity of Worship in a Nation, Establish'd by a *National Council*, that and much more, may it be presumed to suffer in each particular Separate *Congregation* and *Assembly*, by the Power of their Respective *Heads* and *Governours*, because Un-authoriz'd Persons, when they have Stolen into the Chair of Power, are Aptest to Lord it over their Brethren, and are Fond of any Impositions upon the People, that may either Continue them there, or Advance them higher.

There is further another Violence done to *Conscience*, by Toleration which is prevented by Uniformity: And that is, That different Priests, different Altars, different Devotions do by Cooling of Charity Naturally Create Unreasonable, Unconsonable heats among the People, whereas the same Devotions offer'd at the same Altars, by Priests and People of the same Communion, do Warm and Encourage Charity, which is the Life of Religion, and *Conscience*, in the Breasts of *Christians*.

When People by Virtue of *Toleration*, stand Sub-divided into several Sects, their *Consciences* are so Cramp'd, and Clouded with  
pre-

prejudices arising from their Love and Value for their own Club, that they retain no *Liberty*, either of Worshipping with, or indeed of Loving their fellow *Christians*; so that Indulgence, however it may soothe the People for a while, by obliging their Itch of Novelty, in the end it Debaucheth *Conscience* out of it's Native *Liberty*, and Christian *Innocency*; if by this *Liberty* may be meant an Exemption of the Mind from such Prejudices, as stop it's Dilating it self into an Universal Undistinguishing *Charity*, and Worshipping of God in a Mode, different from that of a particular *Congregation*; an Indefinite Indulgence, then however kindly it may be design'd by our Governours, proves to be but a *Licence* to every Shain Divine by his empty *Rhetorickations*, and Scheme of *Discipline*, to Hamper and Confine the *Conscience* of the-Subject, more then the *Established Canons*, and *Uniformity* of the Church can do.

Things are brought to that pass in matters of Religion, That some put a Query, *Whether Universal Primacy over Christendom, or Independent Primacy over single Congregations, do more Effectually check and debauch Christian Liberty in the General.*

The Gospel must either be upon *Establishment*, or *Arbitrary* and *Præcarious*; if upon *Establishment* (then since Miracles cease, which at first Vouch'd and Recommended it's Truth and Equity) it must be fenc'd with such *Laws* as Reward and Encourage its *Friends* and *Abettors*, and punish *Delinquents* and *Opposers* of it; and since it is upon Humane Establishment, it must have a Mixture of Humane Prudence in it's Legal Constitution, and perhaps an Allay of Humane Informity too, as is evident from all Forms of Government wherewith the *Dissenters* have fenc'd it, no less than from that of the Establish'd Church: But when in the Main, the Temporal Welfare, and Eternal Happiness of Men, is, or may, but for our *Tolleration*, be attained by our now prevailing *Episcopacy*, there can remain no Warrant for Men of the same Passions, and Infirmities, who in their *Essays for Reformation* have nothing mended it, to Invade such a Constitution upon the Score of *impositions*; for even their Endeavours that way, are an *Imposition* upon the Publick: And why private Persons should be *Licenc'd* to Impose upon the publick with Impunity, and the publick Branded with Persecution, for Assert-

eing its Laws against the Violence and Contempt of private Persons, I cannot Understand.

If Christianity must be *Præcarious* for fear of Impositions by the Ecclesiastical Party, if it be Establish't; then 'tis to be fear'd the generality of our *Libertines* will account it self an Imposition, Then *Luxury, Lust, and Libertinism* will be *Alamode*; because it is a greater check upon that Sinful *Liberty* which Men are fond of, than any Humane Constitution can be; so that were the *Gospel* upon no Establishment, as our *Libertines* wou'd have it, that same Perverseness of Inclination that makes some Men Impatient of it, fence'd and guarded by Laws and Rules wou'd make them disgust it's Nakedness and Simplicity, did it come Recommended to them only by the Native Innocency of it's Principles, and hard Fate of it's Author.

The last of these all Mankind cannot Match, and the Reputation of the first must be supported by Law and Establishment, since Miracles disappear; so that if by *Liberty of Conscience* be meant, that the *Gospel* should be above the Check, and its Professors free from the Coercive Influence of all Government, then they would have it thrive, and be propagated by other means than our Saviour appointed; for he appointed *Government* and *Governours* for it, and at the same time granted his Disciples full *Liberty of Conscience*, yet so as to Act within the Compass of his Government, and Obediently to the *Spiritual Pastors* of his Appointment.

Or if by this *Liberty* be meant an Inherent Power in every Set of *Christians*, to Incorporate upon what Condition they please, to Frame a new Scheme to themselves, and Appoint *Pastors* and *Governours* at their own liking, this is no more then a *Liberty of Endless Debating and Contention about Forms of Government*, and tho' at First it may seem to have it's Rise from a plausible Pretext of *Liberty*, yet in the End it Enslaves and Confines the *Minds and Consciences* of the People, so much to their particular *Conventicles*, that, that *Universal Benevolence* that Animates the Body of *Christians* is lost; for it is Observable that what ever *Liberty* Men seem to Assert by their Recedeing from a good *Establishment*, they loose it by setting up for themselves, Confining their *Consciences* to a Narrower Compass in things Sacred than the *Scriptures* Require,  
and

and breaking *Charity* with them, with whom they have broken *Communion*.

For *Conscience* may be Crampt either by such Impositions as blindly Tye the *Minds* and *Obedience* of the People to the *Lip* and *Authority* of the *Priest*, or by such Impositions as Interdict their *Obedience* to *Superiours* in things indifferent by *Scripture Rules*, but made Expedient by the *Spiritual Governours Authority*, these to me are Equal Checks both to the *Native* and *Christian Liberty* of the mind, with this Difference, that the former *Artifice* leaves the People no Judgment, no Discretions in things Sacred, but only the *Authority* of the *Priest*, the other do's the same in Effect with a pernicious Clause of making it a *Crime* in the People to Obey or Submit to any Impositions but their own, whereas that very Injunction is *Humane* and *Arbitrary*, and deserves less Obedience from the People than those *Canons* and *Ceremonies* of the *Church*, which they for fear of it dare not own; This Injunction must be *Humane* and *Arbitrary* according to themselves, because they have no Positive Warrant from *Scripture* to offer it to the People, there being no where any Precept in *Scripture* Commanding the *Priest* to Enjoyn the People to Abstain from any Rite in *Religion* as Unlawful, which the *Revelation* of Heaven has not made so.

But the making of a thing Unlawful which the *Scripture* has not made so, is Confining *Conscience* where it hath granted Liberty, and a Falsifying the Charter by Affixing it's Seal to their own Impositions, whereas Enjoyning some things as Expedient, which it hath left *Arbitrary*, and that by a Competent *Authority* allow'd by the *Scripture* it self; to promote *Uniformity*, is no more than a pursuing it's General Rules which tend to Regularity in Publick *Acts* and *Offices*, Such as *let all things be done, &c.* For to have left General Rules with the *Church* Relating to *Decency* and *Order*, to be Applied by Her Wisdom to particular Cases, as to Modes and Circumstances as all Party's own there are, and at the same time to Impower the *Church* to declare Modes and Rites Unlawful, which the *Scripture* has not positively made so, as some *Dissenters* do, is to Charge the Sacred *Authority* with Inconsistency in it's Mandates to Men; And is a Position that is Freight with Unworthy Reflections upon the Wisdom of Heaven in this particular.

Besides



Besides the forbidding of things as Unlawful, which by the Laws of God are Discretionary, such as our *Ceremonies* are, and by Humane *Authority* are made Expedient, is a Violence done both to the Laws of God and Humane *Authority*, which Derives from thence; therefore cannot be a fit Rule for *Conscience*, which must have Regard both to the *Laws* of God and Man.

But Allowing that there are General Rules in *Scripture* for the Decent Regulation of Publick Worship, where the Establish'd Rites of a *Church* are so contriv'd as to be pursuant to them; and not to Contradict either any positive Precept of God, or any Decent Received Custom of the *Nation*, a Negative *Authority* from *Scripture* (that is their not being Enjoyn'd positively there, is not Conclusive against them, because even the *Scriptural* Rules being General, Supposes them not to be there Particularly Commanded, for if they were the Rules wou'd cease to be General, as all Parties own them to be.

Therefore who ever Rejects and Condemns a Rite of the *Church*, meerly for want of a particular *Scriptural* Warrant and teacheth others to do so, Acts Arbitrarily, and Imposes upon *Christians* in things sacred without an *Authority* from God; Thus one of the Grounds of the present *Schism* from the Establish'd *Church* is from the *Dissenting Pastors* Imposing upon the Liberty of the People in this particular; the *Scripture* has left them to be Determined by the *Church* in matters of Rite and Ceremony; The *Dissenting* Teachers tie up, and confine this Liberty to particular Precepts in *Scripture*, which Respect the Substance, and not the Modes of Religion; but they are punish'd in their own kind for their *Sub divisions*, which end in *Enthusiasm*, derive from the same Source with their first Revolt from the *Church*, viz. Others pleading their Wreiting of *Scriptures* to Countenance their Schemes and Customs, as they plead the *Churches* Receding from *Scripture*, in appointing that *Discipline* and those *Ceremonies* which they are Disgusted at, as being Enemies to their own.

But the Mystery of this matter lies hear, People by a Native Iniquity of Temper, are Impatient of a lasting Tye, and Obligation upon

upon their Minds and Manners, and are fond of Novelty, or any thing that by the Artifices of the *Pastor* appears to be so, Hence it is, that a *Constitution* with *Establish'd Rites* is so declaimed against as an Enemy to *Christian Liberty*, and to the loosest Schemes of Government and *Discipline* wherein *Devotions* and *Ceremonies* are most *Arbitrary*, are most in Esteem, whereas among other things, which *Conscience* and the *Establish'd Canons* of the *Church* are to Check that Sinful Itch of *Novelty* is the Chief, because when it is pursu'd, it destroys all Order and *Debauches Devotion*, whereas deasent standing Rules for Order in *Publick Worship*, keep the Minds of Men under an even and Habitual Sense of the Presence and Power of God in Sacred *Assemblies*.

And as this making of things Unlawful which the *Scripture* has not made so, is a bold Usurpation of the *Divine Right*, so it is a great Imposition upon the *Rights* and *Liberties* of *Christians*, for pursuant to it, one Set of Men may confine the *Consciences* and Enslave the Minds and Manners of others at what Rate they please, by fixing *Limates* where God has left them at *Liberty*.

A *Negative Authority* from the *Scriptures*, that is, making every thing Unlawful, wherein they are Silent, was so far from being in Force in the *Apostles Days*, that it seem'd good to the *Holy Ghost*, and to them *Assembled in their Council* at *Jersusalem* (*Acts 15*) even to remove the *Token of Circumcision* from the *Gentile Profelites*, Tho' Commanded in the *Law of Moses*, and to lay no greater Burden upon them than those necessary things, viz, *That they Abstained from Meats offered to Idols, from Blood, from things Strangled, and from Fornication*; Here the positive Law of *Scripture* concerning *Circumcision* is Superfeded in Case of the *Gentiles Conversion*, which was as mighty Accommodation to their Ease and Conveniency, and they left to the free Exercise of all their *Customs* and *Rites*, wherein the *Scripture* is Silent, and which Consisted with their Profession and Practice of the *Gospel*, only Checkt from the Use of those Expressly forbidden in the *Text*, Such as *Meats offered to Idols, &c.* whereas the *Gentiles* had a great many other *Religious Rites*, which had they been Unlawful, because not Commanded in *Scripture*, it

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would have been Proper, if not Necessary in this Place to have caution'd them against;

Our Saviour himself the great Gospel Law-giver, Accommodated himself to the Customs of the People with whom he *Convers'd*, that did not oppose his *Doctrine*, tho' these Customs were not particularly Warranted by any positive Laws of his own, † *Mar. 2. 15.* † Thus he did Eat with Publicans and Sinners, to the Scandal of the Scribes and Pharisees, and Justify'd his so doing by his Design of coming not to Call the Righteous but Sinners to Repentance, and in many things Accommodated with those of the Jewish Rites, which Consisted with the truth of the Gospel.

Thus St. Paul (1. Cor. 9.) became as a Jew to the Jews, that he might gain them, to them that are under the Law, as under the Law, to them that are without the Law, as without the Law, &c. To the Weak as Weak, to all Men, all things, &c. Which must be Understood in their Inoffensive Rites and Customs; And certainly if our Blessed Saviour and his great Apostle Accommodated to Rites which had no positive Warrant from the Revelations of Heaven, a Negative Authority from Scripture, cannot be conclusive against them, and considering how fond Men are of their Rites and Customs, without such an Accommodation to them as do's not Interfer with the truth of Christianity, the Progress thereof in the World would have been considerably Stopt: From this Reason then, and these Precedents the Church derives Authority of Appointing in each Nation, such Rites and Ceremonies of Religion as are pursuant to the General Rules of Scripture, and are Consistent with, and Agreeable to the inoffensive and decent Customs of each particular Nation or Country, so that the Condemning of Rites in Religion, and Publick Worship, for want of a positive Scriptural Warrant, is a late Artifice Found out by some to impose upon the People, their own Sentiments, instead of the Decent Rites of the Church, which come Recommended both by the General Rules of Scripture, and the positive Laws of the National Church.

And the true Cause that emptys the Church, and fills the Convenicles in many places in Brittain and Ireland, is not the Rites and Ceremonies of the Establish'd Church, but the Impositions of the  
Dissent-

*Dissenting Pastors*, Suggesting an ill Opinion of our *Deasencies* and *Discipline*, as *Superstitions* and *Unscriptural*, and Representing *Communion* with the *Church* as a breach of *Union* with *God*, and a good *Conscience*; Thus instead of *Deasent Rites*, and a *Methodical Worship* Warranted by both general and particular *Directions* from *Scripture*, The People receive nothing from them but such *Impositions* as the strength of their *Parts* is able to afford them in *Extemporary Performances*; but are still gull'd into a *Belief*, that in their *Communion* they enjoy greatest *Liberty* of *Conscience*; because by changing their *Phrase*, their *Pastors* have a peculiar *Art* of *Gratifying* their *Itch* of *Novelty*, and making it pass for the *Breathings* of the *Spirit*, and true *Christian Liberty* above *Carnal Rules*, whilst at the same time they *Hamper* their *Consciences*, by *Obliging* their desire of *Novelty*.

We may further observe, That since *Circumstances* and *Modes* are *Inseparable* from *Religion*, and are that which at first may *Recommend* it to, or *Sink* it in the *Esteem* of the *Unthinking People*; it is more proper to leave the *Determination* of them to the *Wisdom* of the *Church*, *Represented* in *Council*, than to the *Discretion* of single *Pastors* in their *Respective Congregations*: And that when *Christianity* was first *Preached* in the *World*, it did not beat down the *Innocent Rites* and *Customs* of the *Nations* where it was to be *Received*; but *Accommodated* with all such of them as did not *Vitiate* it's *Doctrines*, and *Oppose* the *Power* of its *Precepts* among *Men*, it granted a general *Indulgence* to all *Inoffensive Freedoms*; and was so far from *concluding* *Men Criminals* for their use of *Customs* in their own *Nature* *indifferent*, for, or against which there is no *Warrant* in the *Revelations* of *Heaven*, that it *Vouchsafed* pursuant to the *Example* of its *Author Jesus Christ*, and that of his great *Apostle St. Paul*, *To become all things, to all Mankind*: That is, *Put on*, and wore the *Innocent Fashions* of all *Nations*, where-ever it came, so little was a *Negative Authority* from *Scripture* *Urged* in those early times of the *Gospel*: And as it was greater *Advantage* to *Men* to be *Converted* from their *Wickedness* and *Idolatry*, than from their *Customs* otherwise, so it was greater ease to them too; *Wickedness* often *tires* *Men* in the *Practice* of it, and their  
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fatigue in the Labour doth often, if not Incline them to, yet prepare them for Conversion, whereas Customs that are Inoffensive are the harder to be Divorced, because they give no Uneasiness in the Use: Therefore we find the *Gospel* at first Unconcerned in Reducing them, but giving general Rules for *Deasency and Order*; whereas now no Mode, according to some, must be used; but by a Warrant from God, and an Accomodation to the Different Modes of different Nations, is accounted Usurpation in the *Church*, even by those, whose whole Scheme of Government, by Lay-Elders, was derived by its Author Mr. *Calvin*, from an Accommodation to the Peoples Humour at *Geneva*.

Thus they owe the being of their Government, which is perfectly a Humane Creature, to that very Accomodation to the Genius and Customs of the People, which they blame in the *Church* as *Unspiritual*, when she pursuant to it, appoints Rites and Ceremonies for *Divine Worship*; whilst at the same time too, The *Church* can Warrant her Ceremonies by general Rules; And they cannot produce one Scripture for *Lay-Eldership*, as now exercis'd among them; Nay farther, if it were proper in this Discourse to examine the Merit of the Cause, it were no Difficult Task to shew, *That the whole Scheme of the Dissenters Government, Discipline, and Devotions, is an Unprecedented, Unwarrantable Imposition, both by the Laws of God, and these Nations, upon the Christian Liberty of the People of these Kingdoms*: So that a Tolleration that Encourages them is an Enemy to *Christian Liberty*, properly so called; because it proves an Instrument to Enslave the Minds and Consciences of the People, to the Suggestions and Doctrines of Uncommissioned, Unauthoriz'd Persons; it being always Slavery, and not a Rational Service, that is pay'd to those who are Intruders, and have no Commission to Watch, and Preside over the People.

But I find the Apologists for Tolleration in all the *Pamphlets* that come out on that Subject declaim against the Clergy, as a parcel of Designing Men, that cheat the People, and Persecute them for not yielding to it: which Charge they Particularly fix upon the Established Clergy, whereas it is plain, That they themselves are Men



of Interest and Design that wou'd Rise upon the Ruins of the *Church*, and that those Arguments they Use for Indulgence and Toleration, are a greater Cheat upon the Minds, and Check upon the *Consciences* of the People, than those *Doctrines* and *Descencies* of the *Church* which they declaim against; and since it is imposible but that in all *Societies* the Body of the People must under the directive Influence of the *Governing Party*, sure it is more convenient that the Body of the Subjects of these Kingdoms, be under the *Direction* and *Influence* in Sacred things of that Set of Men called the *Clergy*, who prove their *Commission* from Heaven to preside over them, than under the Sway of a parcel of *Libertines*, who Usurpe a Power to Impose their own *Sentiments* upon the World, and Disband the *Church* because She will not Gratifie their Avarice, and Ambition, with Her Honours and Wealth.

These of all Men have least Reason to Tax the *Clergy*, for Bland- ing their Sacred and Civil Rights, and Advanceing one under Co- vert of the other, since it is plain, by what they offer to the World, that they Promote and Advance their own Interest at the Rate of Ruining every thing that is Sacred; and Dissolving all *Communi- ties*.

Besides when Mens Exceptions against the *Church*, are derived from Her *Establishment* and *Prosperity*, and they themselves upon Sufferance and Obnoxious to the Law for *Schism*, it is more than Presumption, that their Scolding at her Constitution, and Clamours for *Liberty*, proceed from Principles of Malice or Interest, or both, and that, that Toleration whereof they are *Patrons*, is the Parent of that Mischief they do to their own Souls, and to the Publick, by their Invadeing that *Government* which the *Apologists* for the *Epis- copal Church* have prov'd to be *Apostolical*, and Consequently a safer Rule for *Conscience*, than that *Libertinism*, they Advance, or any Foolish Scheme they wou'd Set up.

I find further that *Dissenters* of all Sorts declaim against the *Church* for Impositions, and yet at the same time Endeavour their own *Es- tablishment* by Imposing upon her, and that *Socinianism*, *Deism*, *Quakerism*, *Anabaptism*, Spring apace, by the warm Influence of Toleration granted to tender *Consciences*, which brood of *Heresies*

Only Agree in makeing Head and Joyning Forces against the *Establishment*, whereas if any one of these now upon Sufferance, were Established, it would as effectually Endeavour the Supression and Death of the Rest, as the Establish'd Church doth now by her *Canons* endeavour the Banishment of them all.

Then Quere, whether the Establish'd Church may not as Reasonably endeavour her own Continuance in the State She now is in, by Mulcts and Penalties upon her Foes, as they can endeavour to Raise by her Ruin, or any one of them, suppose *Presbytery* advance it self by Checking it's Enemies when it is upon *Establishment*, as now in *Scotland*.

'Tis usual with the *Patrons* of an indefinite Indulgence, who at once Stuff and Debauch the Press with their Arguments, to Blacken the Church with the Infamy of Persecution and Impositions, and then to Charge her with all the Dismal Effects, that these Inhumane Methods have among *Pagans* and *Papists*, viz. *With Blood Cruelty, Aviolation of Natural Equity, &c.* Whereas they do not consider that *Christian Community*, is a thing to Dear and Valluable to Mankind, that nothing can be more, and that if good Offices done that way, be not Rewarded, and evil ones and Violence punish'd, it is the Readiest way for the World to Relapse into *Paganism* and *Atheism*, thus the Relaxation of Church Discipline, by our Tolleration, has made great Step that way already. insomuch that the truth of *Christianity* it self, and that of the Divinity of our Saviour, the two Main Pillars of our Religion, and Christian Morallity, are already Shaking in the minds of Men by the Liberty of the Press, which breeds as many different Monsters in Religion, as any place of *Africa* do's of Beasts.

For Considering the Iniquity of Mens Nature, when with Impunity they may Revolt from the Church; Then they set up for themselves upon any Stock of Principles however Unsound or Immoral, that take most with the People; yet so as by this Religious Trading they get Wealth, and Reputation to themselves.

This makes this Age so Pregnant with *Deism* or *Atheism*, That if you go into the severall Conventicles of *Brittain* or *Ireland*, if you find the same God Preach'd, it is only in Words, for you won't find their

their several Thoughts, the same Concerning him, nor the same thing said of him; which is the next step to their having many Gods, or none, which is the same thing: The Influence of which upon their Conversation and Manners, is to make their Charity as cold, as their Principle are different.

Some of these Apologists (by what means I don't know) do with much Assurance tell the World, *That the Canons of the Church, (which by easie Mulcts oblige the People to Uniformity in Worship, and honesty of Conversation) are Cruel Engines of Persecuting the People, and Cramping their Consciences, much like those wherewith the Heathen Emperors endeavoured to Torment the Primitive Christians out of their Principles into Idolatry:* Not considering, that when God has once Blessed a Nation with the Christian Religion, it is no small Advantage to the People to have the *Principles and Precepts* thereof fenc'd by such Laws as Encourage it's Growth, and Increase, and Discourage all such Divisions among them, as might tend to destroy the Dominion of true Religion over the Minds and Manners of Men; as Reasonable good Rules do the one, and an Indefinite Indulgence effects the other: The Restraints that Heathenish Governours put upon the Primitive Christian People were such, as obliged them to Renounce their God, and their Duty, and to Practice Sin and Idolatry: The Restraints put upon the Christians of this Age, by our Spiritual Governours, are such as Oblige them to a Uniform, and Steddy Practice of Christian Offices, both indeed are Restraints, the one upon the Peoples good and Godly Inclinations, such as the *Sanguinary Edicts of Pagan Princes:* The other upon Mens Wicked, Perverse, and Debauch'd Inclinations, such as the Wholsome Laws and Statutes of Christian Kings and Governours: Therefore nothing but the keenest Malice can Charge these Laws and Proceedings equally with the Crime of Persecution, Besides Heathen Emperors had not the same Reason to Check the Growth of Christianity, by Persecution in it's Non-age, that Christian Kings have now to prevent the Worlds turning *Libertine, or Pagan,* by Mulcts and Penalties; because it is Infinitely more the advantage of Mankind, That the World should be under the Influence of Christianity, than Libertinism: And because the World became Christian  
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by Methods less Offensive to the then Government, than it can *Relapse* into *Paganism* by any Measures, with respect to the now Government; The World became Christian by Reforming the Civil Government, as well as the Religion of Mankind, whereas now it cannot *Relapse*, but by Debauching the Civil no less than the Christian State of Men.

It is further Urg'd by the *Patrons* for *Liberty*, That considering the different Make of Mens Minds, and the different Size of their Knowledge and Convictions, it is Impossible to force Men into the Opinions and Persuasions of others; therefore all Uniformity by Penal Laws, and Coercive Canons must be a Violence done to Conscience.

To this 'tis Answered, That those People who cannot prevail upon their Minds, to receive the Opinions of the publick by an Inward Assent, may nevertheless be Censur'd for an open and Violent opposition of the Establish'd Practices and Ceremonies; for an Inward Dissent of the Mind in things of smaller Moment, cannot oblige them to an open Disturbance of the Peace, which according to the *Apostles* Rule, we are to follow as far as it is possible with all Men; which Rule were Impracticable, if the private Scruples of the particular Members of a Society Anthoniz'd them to break those Rules and Canons, upon the Joynt observance whereof, the Peace and Unity of the Society depends: Besides publick and Establish'd Rules of the *Episcopal Church* have commonly better Pleas, both from *Scripture* and *Reason*, to defend themselves, than any open & Violent Resistance of them can have: Therefore, tho' private Thoughts against them, which in effect cannot touch them, are not Censurable by them, yet an open Invasion of them is lyable to their Castigation and Punishment, otherwise those who offer this Objection cannot pretend to Incorporate into any Society which can promise it self any continuance longer than the minds of it's Members continue to be under the same Convictions and Degrees of Knowledge, which altering every day *Societies*, whose Constitution do's thus precariously depend upon the Fickle thoughts and Opinions of Men must alter as often.

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Men Generally derive their Thoughts of things either from Education, from Convictions of Judgment upon due Examination, or perhaps from the *Revelations* of Heaven, therefore are Accountable to God only for them, but being Incorporated in *Societies* they must in Accomodation to Humane Affairs, be Vested with Authority, either in Extraordinary manner from God, or by Ordinary means of Conveyance from Men, before they Publickly offer any thing against the Establish'd Government and Powers, or patiently submit to those in being, if with a good *Conscience* they may; that is, Consistently with that Information, their Minds Receives from the plain *Revelations* of Heaven, as to what is good or evil, Allowable or Sinful in Worship; Thus if the prevailing Powers in the Church, Command any thing in the Substance and Matter of Worship, that Alienats it from God, and places it upon any thing else, or in the Mode of it, that directly opposes it's being performed in Spirit and in truth, which is the *Scripture* Mode of Worship; then a Plea of *Conscience* is Pertinent and Valid against Conformity to such a Canon as *Unscriptural*, and an *Unlawable Imposition*; but where the *Scriptures* are silent, as to particular Directions, and only gives General Rules, pursuant to which the Church appoints, that God only is to be Worship'd, and that in a Mode full of Decency, with the most Solemn and Uncommon Gravity, there can lye no Plea of *Conscience*, but one of Humour against Conformity in such a Case, because it is presumed that the Publick *Conscience* of the Church hath in these Matters (which by the *Scriptures* are indifferent) made as good Provision as Private *Conscience* can do.

And therefore those Coercive *Canons* which under easie Penalties Oblige to Uniformity in things undetermined by the *Scriptures*, Oblige the People indeed to contradict their Sinful Humour of Singularity, for Peace and Publick Orders sake, but not to turn *Hypocrites* to God and their *Conscience*, for conformity to the Publick; for since Gods Rules are General, they cannot plead Direction from him to the contrary, nor from their *Conscience*, which must not Venture at breaking of Order, or Disobeying the higher Powers, for the Maintaining of one and Obeying the other, there are particular Warrants from God, which cannot be Superseded by General Rules of *Scripture*



ture, being Expounded by particular Men, so as to Gratifie their Humour, and Countenance their Disobedience of Authority ; for where the direction from Heaven is most particular, there the Obligation of *Conscience* is most close and binding, and certain it is that the Direction of God, that **Relates** to Peace and Order is more particular, than that which **Relates** to Modes and Circumstances of Worship ; therefore *Conscience* can't be pertinently pleaded for the breach of those Modes of Worship which are consistent with the General Rules, when thereby Peace and Order is broken, to the maintaining of which, the same Principle of *Conscience*, is under a particular Direction and Obligation of Heaven ; I hope this may be an Answer to the Objection, if not, I am certain it can't be offer'd against the *Establish'd Church*, by any who are Members of any *Society* that admits of any Rules that are binding upon the Minds and Conversation of the People, or by any who allow that there ought to be such *Societies* under the *Gospel*.

For all of them do engage the Conformity of their Members, to their Respective Schemes of Government and Rules of Discipline, notwithstanding of their different make of Minds and Size of knowledge, and that under Penalties too, viz *their Censure and Excommunication*, which they wou'd make the World believe, to be a *Damning Anathema*.

Neither do I know by what Authority *Lay-Elders*, and *Primates* of Particular *Congregations*, can Impose Obligeing Rules upon the Minds of Men, without offering their *Consciences* Violence (tho' they assume that to themselves) more than the Lawful Spiritual Governours of a National *Church* can do upon the Members of the *Establish'd Church*.

The *Schoole-Divines*, if I remember well, offer something about an Erronious *Conscience*, and the Obligation thereof ; I suppose they mean that a Man must pursue his present Convictions of Judgment and Thought, otherwise offend God by turning *Hypocrite* to his own Mind : Therefore say they, *Suppose a Man may be in a mistake concerning the Establish'd Church, yet he must pursue those Suggestions which incline him to Non-conformity, because he must follow the Dictates of his Conscience* : but tho' this, altering the Case holds against all Religious *Societies*, as much as against the *Establish'd Church* ; for sure it is possible that Men may be under some Erronious Convictions with

with Respect to them, no less than with Respect to her; yet in favour of all Societies, I think this may be offered in answer to it, *viz.* That since *Thought* is the Fountain of *Action*, Men are as much Obligated to take care to Purge the one of Errour, as to keep the other clean of Immortalities: Therefore before any one can Reasonably plead *Conscience* for *Schism* in the *Church*, or *Mutiny* in the *State*, he ought to Consider well, Whether by pursuing the Constitutions of the *Church* and *State*, and that by all possible means of Information, he might not be a good *Orthodox Christian*, and an Honest, Upright Man; otherwise he is not Acted by any Invincible, perhaps excusable Errour of *Conscience*, but a very faulty Humour, which Hurries him without any Reasonable Direction, into Mischief and Inconveniency.

For the Stated *Doctrines* of the *Church*, and allowed *Maxims* of *State*, were no doubt appointed to give Directions in that Case; therefore those who are wilfully Ignorant of them, and make a breach in either upon that Score, are as Culpable as those who become Vicious by the Transgression of known and Equitable Laws, nay, perhaps those who are wilfully Ignorant of an Unsound Constitution, and break it, not because it is Unsound, but because they did not Examine it, are not without Fault, so much are Men bound to Examine before they break a Society.

Whether the Body of the *Dissenters* have done our *Church* and themselves Justice in this particular, before their *Revolt*, let the World Judge; likewise, whether that Erronious *Conscience*, which is sometimes Urged in this Case, may not be charged upon their Neglect in this particular: They often pleading a *Conscientious Non-conformity* to those Canons which they never Examind'd, which is the Method by which the Separate Assemblies have differed among themselves also.

If it should be Urg'd hear, *That most of the Arguments in this Discourse are Retorted upon the Dissenters, which is none of the best ways of Defending a Cause, and supposes that the Cause thus Defended, is rather beholding to its Adversaries Weakness, than its own strength*: I offer, that since the Subject of what is treated of hear, is matter of *Conscience*, with Relation to Constitutions, Government, and Ceremonies,

monies, which derive indeed from God by general Rules; but from Humane Prudence and Authority, as to the particular Modification and Circumstances of them Retorting of Arguments, and Recriminating a Constitution, is a good Plea against those, who under Cover of running the Church down by Divine Right, advance themselves by the Subtil Arts of Humane Policy, and Contrivance, as I presume has been in some measure shew'd in this Discourse; and why the Church may not turn the Point of these Weapons against the *Dissenters*, which they Darted at, and design'd for her Bowels, I cannot Understand.

Tho' this Discourse gives the Church a Power in point of *Conscience* to punish *Delinquents* against her *Canons*; yet Reforms are as Practicable by the Principles thereof, as in any Separate Assemblies, where there are Rules for Discipline and Worship Establish'd by Penal Injunctions; and in both Cases Reforms must Commence from the Necessity that the Body of Christians may possibly be under, of doing themselves Justice in the Substantials of their Religion, according to the Revelations of Heaven, when their Governments have lost the Power of Directing them, and Consequently of Censuring them for Receding from their none or ill manag'd Authority; whereas *Toleration* in the loosest Sence, as it tends to Debauch all Principles so it baffles the Power of all Precepts, and makes Reformation Impracticable; because the right Measures to be used in them, may be Construed a Violation of the *Liberty of Conscience*.

Some may say, that this Discourse is an Apology for the Inquisition in *Spain*, or *Presbytery* in *Scotland*, as well as for the Establish'd *Episcopacy* in *Ireland*, but this is a Frivolous exception both because each of them are Humane Creatures, having no Proof for their Divine Institution and appointment, as *Episcopacy* has; to which this Discourse enjoyns a Submission and Conformity in point of *Conscience*, and because neither the Recusants in *Spain*, if any there be, nor the *Episcopal* Party in *Scotland* that I know, have made such Concessions to the there Establishments, viz. *That their Souls are safe in their Communion, as the Dissenters in England and Ireland have made to the Establish'd Episcopacy in these Kingdoms*; It being own'd thro' this Discourse, that where a Mans Soul is in Real Danger by Humane

Humane Impositions, there he may break the Society rather than Perish with the Crowd, otherwise by separation he cannot propose any good, Tantamount to the Mischief of the Schism, so that in this matter the *Separatists* must either Revoke their Concessions, and so give themselves the Lye, or own their Separation to be Needless and Wicked.

I Remember a late *Apologist* for Toleration tells the World, *That several Sets of Religionists may live as Amicably under the kind Influence of an Indefinite Indulgence, as the several Sects of the old Philosophers did, notwithstanding their different, and contradictory Sentiments about the Nature of Things.*

In Answer to which we may observe, That Debates about the Weightiest Concerns are always the greatest; and that Men are not so apt to break Charity in those Controversies that are of no Consequence to them, as in those where their Interest in their God, and their Heaven is at Stake, as it is In the case of Religion: Besides, had *Christianity*, without the Fences of a Legal Establishment, been exposed to the Various Opinions and Fancies of Men, we should e're now have had the old Christianity and the new, as we have the old Philosophy and the new.

And there is another Reason why Christianity should be upon Establishment, tho' Philosophy be not; because Philosophy has the same Reason of Mankind to support it in this Age, which at first gave being to it; whereas the Miracles that *Usher'd* Christianity into the World are ceas'd, and least it should fall with them, it must be supported by Laws, which appears by the Practice of all those who have form'd themselves into Religious Societies: Few offer at Miracles, but all Establish Rules and Laws, with Fines and Penalties; and tho' they can't all have the Magistrate on their side, whose Coercive power, against the growth of *Heresies*, is given out to be such a formidable Engine of Persecution; yet the Masters of the several *Separate Assemblies*, practice that which they count *Tyranny* in the Establishment, viz. According to the Scantling of their Power in Temporals, they punish their Enemies or Deserters from them, by Encouraging no Trade nor Commerce with them, and in Spirituals wherein they think they have a plenitude of Power from Heaven,

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they Thunder *Anathemas* and *Excommunications* against their Obstinate Children, with as great Violence as any, so that they daily practice those Censures among themselves, which they cry down in the *Church* as Persecution, with this difference that their Censures not being edg'd with Authority, cannot wound *Delinquents* so much in their Persons and Fortunes, as those of the *Church*; but still both the *Church* and they proceed to Censure upon the same general Consideration of its being Impossible to support *Society*, otherwise than by Laws and Canons, Rewards and Punishments, Encouraging of Friends, and Punishing of Enemies.

There are some Arguments offered in behalf of *Liberty* and *Toleration*, because it *Planteth Countreys*, and *Encourageth Trade*, and *Artificers*: Sure this Argument cannot properly be Urg'd by those who tax the Establish'd *Clergy*, for blending Sacred and Civil Rites, and Advancing the one under Covert of the other; since this is a Daubing in the highest degree, and a Promiscuous Jumble of Religion and Trade, of *Conscience* and *Commerce*, wherein still *Traffick* must have the Ascendant; because that must be secured by Laws and Constitutions in the Respective Corporations of Traders. So that a Hundred years hence they may, perhaps, have a good Trade, but no Religion; because to Indulge these Trading *Libertines* their Humour, Ecclesiastical Laws, with Respect to the *Church*, must be Suspended, and of no Force, whereas Civil Laws to support Commerce, and Trade must be Maintained.

And if in some Countries *Religion* and *Trade*, both have thriven by throwing of the Yoak of *Poperie* that makes nothing against what has been here Offered in behalf of our *Canons*, which were Established to preserve the Peace, Decency and Unity of the *Church*; let the *Church* of *Rome* look to Her own *Politricks*, I know not how any Advocate for the *Church* of *England* is concern'd in them; and since, as has been already Hinted, it is the Cause that makes the punishing of any *Nonconforming* People to a Constitution, either the Duty of a Parent, or the Crime of a Persecutor, it will then be time for those, who Charge our Governours and Laws with Persecution, with Respect to *Dissenters*, equally with the *Church* of *Rome*, with Respect to *Protestants* in General, when they can shew that what our  
Church

*Church* Obliges the People to believe and Practice, is as unsound *Heterodox* and *Inconsistent* with the *Gospel* Faith and Precepts, as what the *Church* Obligeth her People to, and pretends to have a Power to Oblige all the World to, but till then the *Accusation* is false and foolish for *Chastisement* may be the Duty of a Father, or the the Crime of a Persecutor, as it is *Circumstantiated*. To whip People into the belief of *Transubstantiation*, *Invocation of Saints*, and *Worshipping of a Water*, may be *Persecution* and *Rage*, but to Oblige People to say nothing against the *Trinity*, the *Divinity* of our *Saviour Christ*, and the *Holy Ghost*, to Oblige them to keep the *Unity of the Faith*, and *Second*, that with a *Steady Uniform Obedience* of *Gospel* precepts, and *Unexceptionable Canons*, is the Duty of *Spiritual Pastors*, for the Neglect of which, they are *Accountable* to God.

Besides, what ever the *Dissenters* of all sorts do, by *Mutes* and *Penalties*, either to *Proselyte* the People to them, or keep them with them, is *Persecution* in the Cause, tho' for want of *Authority*, it can't now *Wound* in the Effect; for he that under *Penalties* Obliges me to much maintain *Lay-Eldership*, or *Independant Primacy* over *Single Congregations*, to be *Jure Divino*, the *Church Government* do's as much persecute me, as he who Obliges me to Maintain the *Popes Supremacy*, since the one is as *Unscriptural* as the other, nay further, who ever under any *Penalty* wou'd Oblige me to believe, and say, that *Tolleration* and *Liberty* for all sorts of People and Forms of Government, that they have a mind to set up, is a *Method* of *Gods Appointment* for the *Propagation* and thriving of the *Gospel*, properly persecutes me, because he Obliges me to *Act* and *Speak* contrary to those *Revelations* Relating to *Church Government*, which we have from *Heaven*, so that, that very *Tolleration* which the *World* seems so fond of, as an *Enemy* to *Persecution*, may prove an *Engine* and *Instrument* of it, as it was in the late *Reign* of *King James*, but upon the whole *Matter*, there is one thing, and only one thing that *Recommends* *Tolleration* to me, and that is, that it is allow'd to the *Inhabitants* of these *Kingdoms*, by one of the greatest and *Wiseest* *Princes*, and one of the greatest and *Wiseest* *Senats* perhaps in the *World*, all my *Deference* is due to their *Steady Conduct* of *Affairs*. May their *Councils* be *Directed* by *Heaven*, and all their *Polliticks* blest with  
Wisdom,

*Wisdom, that they may become the Instruments of great and lasting Happiness to themselves, and these Nations. But this Advantage all the Enemy's of Tolleration have against it, that it can offer them no Violence without Ruining it self, which Consideration chiefly Encouraged me, to Expose these few Sheets to Publick View.*

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F I N I S



